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# CREATIVE OXFORD

## Its Influence in Victorian Literature

BY
WILLIAM S. KNICKERBOCKER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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# INTRODUCTION

THIS little book on Oxford's collective power upon Victorian thought and literature grew out of a study of Matthew Arnold in an effort to relate him to his Oxford background. As the study proceeded, it became evident that other Victorian writers revealed indications of changes which were going on in Oxford during their undergraduate careers. I suppose that there are many other Americans like myself who have believed that because Oxford still has many medieval aspects it has enjoyed a tranquillity undisturbed by what Arnold called "the fierce intellectual life of our century." Investigation, however, disclosed that such was not the case, that seldom since the days of its origins has it been as agitated as it was in the nineteenth century. The importance of that agitation and its effects in English cultural history grew upon me until I decided to put aside temporarily my studies of Arnold until I had satisfied my curiosity. Hence the present essay.

But why, it may reasonably be asked, another book on Oxford? Has not Oxford been so thoroughly and satisfactorily described and explained as to make another merely supererogatory? To both of these questions I would simply say that, so far as I know, there is no existing essay covering precisely the same field. Suggestions for the present work may, it is true, be frequently found in books written with other objects, books concerned chiefly with describing or explaining Oxford as an academy of learning or in

giving picturesque treatments of its scenes and environs. To write another with similar aims would indeed be needless. This book avoids those fields except as references to them are made incidentally, or as a preliminary for what follows. It attempts, rather, from a careful study of all available literary sources, to discover why, after a considerable period of relative sterility as a spiritual force exerted upon the mind of England, Oxford's influence was restored in the Victorian era. Illustrative of this main object are two necessary correlatives: to connect the increasing public sentiment for the place as revealed in literature with its causes; and to indicate the nature of Oxford influence by briefly reviewing the experience of some of the more outstanding Victorian writers who, however diverse may have been other and later influences, were profoundly conditioned by it during undergraduate days.

This bare statement of the main purposes of the book brings to mind a warning by Hazlitt to the effect that there is danger to an idealised conception of Oxford if it is brought too intimately in contact with the real Oxford.[1] That young American Rhodes Scholar who recently, after a year's residence, gave vent to his disappointment with Oxford in the pages of one of its undergraduate journals amply illustrates the point. The ideal may indeed be a compensation for the shortcomings of the real but it may be observed that there is a close interaction between the two. The ideal, the *theoretic*, however slowly circumstances may keep the interaction from revealing evidences, has a corrective, formative power upon the real. In this connection it is well to recall the wise observation of the philosopher Santayana, the axiom which underlies his view

[1] See page 54.

of things and to which I confess indebtedness. "That which is spiritual has a material basis, and that which is physical has a spiritual interpretation." The formula is strikingly true of Oxford.

The whole drift of my discussion tends to demonstrate that the spiritual interpretation of Oxford cannot be successfully disengaged from its physical and historic basis. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that increase of modern sentiment for Oxford developed as the concomitant — if not, indeed, as the result — of an ascertainable series of causes, the first of which was the conflict of two forces — one, of efforts made by Liberals to impose reform upon Oxford through Parliamentary action; and the other, of vigorous resistance made by Oxonian Conservatives to oppose such a method of reform. Other causes — like Tractarianism, Oxonian Liberalism, and the sense of Oxford's mission to preserve the humanities — were organically related to this fundamental one. Out of this initial stirring of thought and ideals, affection for the *genius loci* of Oxford was deepened and extended. It was not wholly possible for Oxonians to evade or forget, and crops out in reminiscences such as that of Frederic Harrison's: "Oxford is one of those influences which we do not recognise until after long years but which loom more fully as old age comes on." It also has a way of coming to the surface in the writings of Oxford men so distinctly that one can hardly resist saying, "There, *that* is the Oxford touch." [2]

It may be objected, however, that to seize some sense of the play of these forces could properly and successfully be achieved only by a son of Oxford. That I readily con-

[2] *Vide* Dr. Frank Aydelotte's *The Oxford Stamp*.

cede: no one, indeed, could wish more than I that it be done by one of them. Oxonians, however, not only have never been prone to indulge in diversions of this character, but, even when the notion may have occurred to them, they have manifested an Olympian unconcern or impatience with it. If, then, the effort were left untried until they occupied the field, it might never, in the nature of things, be attempted. But it is too important to be left untouched. Source materials, thanks to biographies, college histories, novels, essays, and poetry, are now available.

But possibly an American in handling these materials may infer more than they warrant and imply more than he intends. Oxford is so beautiful and so old: and Americans are also, to some extent, incorrigibly feudal in their flutterings and anxieties about anything that has glamour of pomp or tradition. I am well aware of this, and of my own susceptibility to the failings of my countrymen; but after all, my desire is neither to defend, to extol, nor to urge an American imitation of Oxford. Some efforts have been made by some of our outstanding colleges and universities to create conditions analogous to those in Oxford, but however laudable these efforts are, however successful they may be in improving the *ethos* of the places where they are being tried, it seems to me that on the whole we as Americans ought to face the inevitable; that Oxford is the ripe product of English civilisation and that it is impossible for us with our educational traditions and problems arising out of a different political and social condition to succeed in imitating it. Oxford may serve as an inspiration but not for imitation. If incidentally here and there in the text I betray some sympathy with what I conceive, on good authority, to be its "secret," I can but say

that that "secret" is to me very inspiring. Yet even in this I know that I am open to the charge of what Swinburne somewhat contemptuously called "effusive Oxonolatry." But if this element is discerned, it ought not to obscure my intention: to correlate literature with social forces. To unite them in any case makes an important and interesting chapter hitherto missing for the student or general reader. If the effort is achieved, then this book may have its place as a codex in what an Oxonian scholar called "the great Goliardic text . . . of a cycle of romances known as *The Legend of Oxford*."[3]

I wish to express my gratitude to those who have been of help; particularly to Professor Ashley H. Thorndike of Columbia University, who gave sympathetic criticism while the book was being written, and to my wife, whose broad scholarship and fine insight aided greatly in the form which it assumed. To others who read it in manuscript or in conversation about it made helpful suggestions, thanks are also due: to Professors Jefferson B. Fletcher, G. C. D. Odell, George P. Krapp, William Witherle Lawrence, John Erskine, and Irwin Edman, all of Columbia University; and to Professors in Syracuse University, Horace A. Eaton, Eugene F. Bradford, and Ray P. Bowen. I am also indebted to Mr. Wilbur E. Pearce, Manager of the Syracuse University Book Store, who superintended the printing and publication.

W. S. K.

[3] H. Spencer Scott: Foreword to Vol. II, *In Praise of Oxford*, p. v.

# CREATIVE OXFORD

## Chapter I

## *LEGEND*

### Oxford in Poetry and Fiction

"Here at Oxford," wrote Henry James in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, "we encountered the scattered phalanx of the young, the happy generation, clad in white flannels and blue, muscular, fair-haired, magnificent, fresh, whether floated down the current by idle punts and lounging friendly couples when not in a singleness that nursed ambitions or straining together in rhythmic crews and hoarsely exhorted from the near bank. When to the exhibition of so much of the clearest joy of wind and limb we added the great sense of perfumed protection shed by all the enclosed lawns and groves and bowers, we felt that to be young in such scholastic shades must be a double, an infinite blessing. . . . We repaired in turn to a series of gardens and spent long hours sitting in their greenest places. They struck us as the fairest things in England and the ripest and sweetest fruit of the English system. . . . Mightn't one fancy this the very center of the world's heart, where all the echoes of the general life arrive but to falter and die? Doesn't one feel the air just thick with arrested voices? It's well that there should be such places, shaped in the interest of factitious need, invented to minister to the book-begotten longing for a medium in which one may dream unwaked and believe

unconfuted; to foster the sweet illusion that all's well in a world where so much is damnable, all right and rounded, smooth and fair in this sphere of the rough and ragged, the pitiful unachieved especially, and the dreadful uncommenced. The world's made — work's over. Now for leisure! England's safe — now for Theocritus and Horace, for lawn and sky! What a sense it all gives of the composite life of the country and of the essential furniture of its luckier minds? "

Oxford is a city wondrously fair and beautiful, beautiful not only for situation and environs but also for its happy associations. Hemmed in on all sides except at the north by low wooded hills, in summer bathed in mist or in sunshine; in winter sparkling with jewels of light made by the heaviness of the moist atmosphere, it lies in a fertile valley where the River Thames rounds in a southerly direction the bold headland of Wytham. Its gardens and meadows are watered by two famous streams, the Isis and Cherwell, which, flanked by picturesque oaks, elms, and willows, wind leisurely through the region. " She needs not June for beauty's heightening." Hardy's Jude Fawley saw it at dusk from the distant highlands of " Marygreen." " Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape points of light like the topaz gleamed. The air increased in transparency with the lapse of minutes till the topaz points showed themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates, and other shining spots upon the spires, domes, freestone work, and varied outlines that were faintly revealed." The brooding and contemplative Hawthorne walking about its streets saw " timeworn fronts of famous colleges and halls of learning . . . arched entrances . . . bits of sculpture from

monkish hands . . . the most grotesque and ludicrous faces, as if the slightest whim of . . . old carvers took shape in stone . . . an ancient stone pulpit in the quadrangle of Magdalen College . . . a dimly magnificent chapel . . . with painted windows but of a sombre tint." "The world," he concluded, "has not another place like Oxford; it is a despair to see such a place and ever to leave it."

Through many centuries Oxford has silently developed a legend which, growing less and less a matter of tradition, has been articulated in various forms of literature. Medieval, renaissance, and modern poets have attempted to seize Oxford's beauty and make it vocal. Before the Victorian era, however, the effort was chiefly limited to Oxford poets whose lines were probably not intended for general readers. The remarkable increase in literature of sentiment for the spirit of the place is one of the interesting phenomena of the Victorian era.

Wherever the theme of *laus Oxoniensis* appeared in the polished verse of the eighteenth century, Oxford was alluded to or described as the "English Athens," "the seat of the Muses," and similar epithets which were somewhat conventionalised relics of a classicism even then in decadence. Such was its character, for instance, in the longest poem on the theme which then appeared — Thomas Tickell's *Oxford* (1710). That poet, now of no significance except that he was the friend and biographer of Addison, made no inspiring couplets in praise of his *alma mater*. Rather, he made an earnest effort to portray concretely some of the physical aspects of the place, framing his poem on what may be called "the guide-book" plan, noting patiently and in order each of the colleges, halls,

and those spots which had some historical association attached to them. His poetic diction obscured for him and his readers any vivid or beautiful glimpse of Oxford. To him it was a place of "grots," "fountains," and "pleasing shades." His chilly precision was less noticeably present in Thomas Warton's *The Triumph of Isis* (1764). Warton had a genuine devotion to the Gothic loveliness of the place and succeeded in communicating it. Nevertheless, like Tickell, he needed a new and richer vocabulary, a treasury of sensuous words which would convey colors, forms, sounds, and the feeling of the beautiful scene.

The romantic movement supplied the vocabulary and the sensuousness which the theme needed for proper expression. It is significant that among the sonnets of William Lisle Bowles, which so greatly won the young Coleridge's admiration, there was one entitled *Oxford Bells* which struck a new note. His contemporary, Thomas Russell of New College, also wrote a sonnet, *Oxford Memories*, which revealed the Oxonian's sentiment with freshness. Wordsworth, who was awarded an Oxford degree in 1820, was moved on that occasion to indite his famous lines:

*". . . O ye spires of Oxford! domes and towers!*
*Gardens and groves! Your presence overpowers*
*The soberness of reason; till, in sooth,*
*Transformed, and rushing on a bold exchange,*
*I slight my own beloved Cam, to range*
*Where silver Isis leads my stripling feet*
*Pace the long avenue or glide adown*
*The stream-like wanderings of that glorious street,*
*An eager novice robed in fluttering gown."*

Although Keats wrote some interesting jingles while he was staying at Oxford, what is more important is the fact that at that time he wrote much of his *Endymion* in an environment in tune with its opening:

*"A thing of beauty is a joy forever!"*

Shelley wrote nothing in praise of Oxford but his admirer and disciple, Thomas Beddoes, wrote some magnificent lines entitled *Oxford in May*. As a kind of bathetic climax to this new effort to celebrate Oxford in poetry, Robert Montgomery, an unimportant poetaster, published in 1830 a long and tedious poem, greatly reminiscent of Tickell's, describing faithfully each of the famous sights of the place.[1]

By the time Victoria ascended the throne, the interaction of several forces which made the mind of the era infused a new spirit and tone into treatment of the theme, until, with the passing of time, it blossomed into a literature of incomparable witchery and magic. The first of these forces was Tractarianism. The poets of that movement, through their eager and passionate devotion to the Catholic concept of Oxford and their delight in ecclesiastical art, types of which they saw all about in Oxford, deepened emotion and sentiment as they gave expression to their view of the University in their poetry. Through their efforts, the sight of Oxford thereafter inevitably brought to the mind of the beholder some sense of the religious awe in which they themselves saw the place. Later poets could not resist

[1] All of the poems mentioned may be found in *In Praise of Oxford*, 2 vols. by Seccombe and Scott, Constable, London, 1912; *The Oxford Garland* by Oona H. Ball, Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., London, 1909; *The Glamour of Oxford* by William Knight; and *The Minstrelsy of Isis* by S. W. Firth, Chapman & Hall, 1908.

seeing it in the same light, and this, significantly enough, is true to our own day.

Newman himself wrote no poem on Oxford, but his *Snapdragon* is an interesting revelation of his aspirations while he was in college cloisters. Beholding the wild flower growing in a cranny of Trinity College, he was led to muse on the symbolism of flowers; for him this snapdragon typified "lowly thought and cheerful pains":

> *"Ah! no more a scentless flower,*
> *By approving Heaven's high power,*
> *Suddenly my leaves exhale*
> *Fragrance of the Syrian gale.*
> *Ah! 'tis timely comfort given*
> *By the answering breath of Heaven!*
> *May it be! then well might I*
> *In College cloister live and die."*

Keble, Newman's friend and inspirer, not only breathed the spirit of the Oxford countryside into his *Christian Year*, but in his *Oxford from Bagley 8 A.M.* he revealed it beautifully as the rays of dawn lit up its points in flames of beauty:

> *"Lo! on the top of each aerial spire*
> *What seems a star by day, so high and bright,*
> *It quivers from afar in golden light;*
> *But 'tis a form of earth, though touched with fire*
> *Celestial, raised in other days to tell*
> *How, when they tired of prayer, Apostles fell."*

This deep feeling of religious devotion to Oxford as a symbol of Catholic faith became, during the decade of the

forties, the chief inspiring motive for William Frederick Faber, a Wordsworthian enthusiast who united affection for Oxford's physical aspects and for its traditions. This fusion may be seen in his *Oxford in Winter*, *College Library*, *College Chapel*, *College Garden*, *Oxford from the Isis*, and in his Wordsworthian effort, *The Cherwell Water Lily*. His *Absence from Oxford* and *Aged Cities* disclose the true Wordsworthian note of the overflow of powerful feelings in moments of serenity:

*"Fair City! that so long hast been my home!*
*When from thy quiet places I depart*
*By far-off hills and river banks to roam,*
*I bear thy name about upon my heart.*
*City of glorious towers! whene'er I feel*
*The world's cold rudeness o'er my spirit steal,*
*Then dost thou rise to view; thine elm of groves*
*Vocal with hymns of praise, thine old grey halls,*
*Where the wan sun of Autumn sweetest falls,*
*Yon hill-side wood the nightingale so loves,*
*Thy rivers twain, of gentle foot, that pass*
*Fed from a hundred willow-girded wells,*
*Through the rich meadow lands of long, green grass,*
*To the loud tune of all thy convent bells."*

Faber was Matthew Arnold's forerunner, but the latter's *Thyrsis* and *Scholar Gypsy* struck an original and fresh note. They revealed the yearning for mental and spiritual peace of one who had himself while in Oxford felt blowing upon him all of the winds of modern doctrine which surged through the place in his day. The effect of these poems was Theocritan; they were carefully wrought idyls disclosing the vivid currents of ideas which made

Oxford vital and potent in a day of devastating changes. Created in a mood of high contemplation and sensitiveness to the spirit of the place, they at once lifted the theme to the plane which was thereafter maintained by innumerable poets whom they influenced. Lyrics, elegies, sonnets, and, indeed, a long meditative poem, *Corydon*, by Reginald Fanshawe, reflect Arnoldian influence. Only a few of them may be mentioned, for their name is legion. Ward's *Soul of Oxford*, Lionel Johnson's *Bagley Wood, To Walter Pater; Oxford Nights; Oxford: to Arthur Galton;* Oscar Wilde's *Nightfall in the Valley*, and J. W. Mackail's *Last May-day* are among the more notable. To show their general tenor, some stanzas from Fanshawe's *Corydon* will suffice:

*"A fainter loveliness than theirs*[2] *is thine,*
*Bred of an English May and melting air;*
*A livelier green, a growth more tender line*
*Low hill and meadow deep. Thy worn walls bear*
*A grey more reverend. More demurely fair*
*Thy cloistered meaning feels a skiey gleam*
*Colder. Thy mystic skirts of beauty wear*
*More liquid lucent many a folded stream,*
*A softer rose and mist draw down thy twilight dream.*

*So potent, pure thy charm, not Corydon*
*Could from the magic web romantical,*
*Woven with afterglow of mystery gone,*
*By moonlit fancy and by mouldering wall,*
*By painted twilight in that haunting hall,*

[2] *i.e.* Rome, Athens, Florence. "Corydon" to whom the lines refer is Matthew Arnold. The stanzas quoted are XLIV and LXV.

*Free all his fancy. Half the lingering gleam*
*He felt, and breath of grey enchantment fall*
*From brooding tower on his clear spirit's stream,*
*And draw its mirror back to mingle with the dream.*"

Since the middle years of the nineteenth century, therefore, poets have remarkably succeeded in creating universal sentiment for Oxford. They have endowed it with a golden gleam of imaginative light, with a spiritual meaning. Not only is it an *ensemble*, a symphony, of grey Gothic buildings, cool shaded walks, green lawns and meadows, and quiet cloisters but it is also "the queen of romance waging warfare against the Philistines, and will wage war after we are gone." Novelists profited by the successes of the poets, deriving from them the mood in which the genius of Oxford could be most beautifully and effectively communicated. From them they learned how to suggest its mystery, how to evoke its glamour as a city of ghosts and dreams, its haunting pathos, its undying memories of "old, unhappy, far-off things."

## II

If this delightful sentiment for Oxford existed in the eighteenth century, the novel of that time does not show it.[3] The few references one may find there are indirect and are far from being complimentary. In *Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson exhibited a young prig fresh from Oxford nicely pinked by a London rake in a repartee concerning college education. In *Tom Jones*, Fielding had his "man of the hill" soliloquise on the evils of Oxford

[3] *Vide: The Clerke of Oxenforde in Fiction.*

life. And in *Humphrey Clinker*, Smollett made Mr. J. Melford, an undergraduate, confess that the reason for his travels was the fact that he did not care to own the parenthood of an infant about to be born to a silly Oxford serving maid. These scattered and unflattering references to the results of Oxford residence, unrelieved by any sympathetic attempt to describe its beneficial aspects, persisted in occasional passages in novels published during the first half of the nineteenth century and only gradually disappeared from the novel as the whole tone and atmosphere of Oxford changed so completely as to make them less convincing or probable. Thus, Thackeray's Harry Foker of *Pendennis*, Hughes's Blake of *Tom Brown* and "Cuthbert Bede's" *Verdant Green*, strikingly remind one of Fielding's "Man of the Hill." Blifil, Tom Jones's smug Oxonian tutor, bears a similar close resemblance to Jane Austen's Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* and to Mr. Smirke in *Pendennis;* all three either derived or developed their specious piety, their creators inform us, during Oxonian careers.

This unromantic view of Oxford persisted in some early nineteenth century novels. Thomas Love Peacock in introducing Squire Headlong to the readers of *Headlong Hall* spoke of him as having become "seized with a violent passion to be thought a philosopher and a man of taste; and accordingly . . . he set off on an expedition to Oxford, to inquire for other varieties of the same species, namely, men of taste and philosophers; but, being assured by a learned professor that there were no such things in the University, he proceeded to London."[4] When Fanny in Miss Austen's *Mansfield Park* took her cousin's arm —

[4] Peacock: *Headlong Hall*, pp. 52–53.

that cousin who is one of the first sympathetic portraits of the Oxonian in fiction — her lightness of touch reminded him of his Oxford days when "he was a good deal used to have a man lean on me for the length of a street." And finally, among these occasional references, not indeed numerous but all more or less similar, is Scott's young eighteenth century Oxonian in *Guy Mannering* who, in engaging Dominie Sampson in a dialectical duel, is thrown *hors de combat* by the Dominie's superior knowledge and ability.

From about 1810, therefore, one may see the turn by which affection and sentiment for Oxford began to find their way into literature. Increasing public interest in Oxford was manifested by a series of criticisms published by the *Edinburgh Review* in its earliest issues, which may have inspired a number of descriptive and historical sketches of the University published during the second decade of the century. What one cannot fail to note in these guides or handbooks to Oxford is their total lack of romantic appeal; indeed, of fresh and original impressions. Most of them were compiled from the annals of Anthony-a-Wood or Thomas Hearne and were, therefore, merely anecdotal or sketchy in character without revealing any historical sense whatever. Curiosity in "gothic" relics probably inspired them. The most important were Malton's *Views of Oxford* (1810); *Oxoniana*, 4 vols. (1812); *History of the University of Oxford*, 2 vols. (1814); *Fasti Oxoniensis* by Wood, edited by Philip Bliss (1819); also Wood's *Athenae Oxoniensis* (1819; Chalmers' *History of the University of Oxford* (1820), and Wade's *Walks in Oxford* (1821).

It is hardly questionable that this antiquarian interest to

some extent influenced Sir Walter Scott in his choice of subject and handling of materials in *Woodstock* (1827), in which he had occasion to describe Queen Elizabeth's Royal Visitation to Oxford. But it is noticeable that he failed to introduce scenes or characters of Oxford proper. Woodstock was as far as he accompanied the Royal Visitor. It is equally probable that Charles Lamb was inspired by the same cause to write his delectable *Oxford in Vacation.* Considered as a whole, his essay had far less to say about Oxford as it was or as he saw it than about the antiquarian activities of his friends Dyer and Montague. They were the immediate cause of his apostrophe: "Antiquity! thou wondrous charm what art thou? that, being nothing, art everything! When thou *wert*, thou wert not antiquity, then thou wert nothing, but hadst a remoter *antiquity*, as thou calledst it, to look back to with blind veneration, thou thyself being to thyself flat, jejeune, *modern.* What mystery lurks in this retroversion? or what half Januses are we, that cannot look forward with the same idolatry with which we for ever revert. The mighty future is a nothing, being everything! the past is everything, being nothing!"

With Lamb in particular began that tendency now so familiar with the very name of the place to endow it with romantic glamour. How many non-Oxonians like him have mused as he did: "Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted *ad eundum.* I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel bell, and dream that it rings for *me.* In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitour. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments I proceed Master

of Arts. . . . Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor."

Something of this tone appeared in *Bracebridge Hall*. Washington Irving, that first of a long line of "passionate pilgrims" from America, traced connections between the kindly atmosphere of the Bracebridge home and Oxford. The Squire himself had a bookish turn which, said the genial Geoffrey, he had acquired at Oxford. His literary taste was kept pure by constant association with the parson who had been his college friend. His son, a madcap youth — "rather fonder of his horse than his book, with a little dash of the dandy" — was also an Oxonian, not greatly unlike the conventional collegian depicted in what later came to be a special type of fiction, the novel of college life.

Although writers still hesitated, like Irving himself, to depict actual Oxford life, they became interested in describing collegians in their gayer moments elsewhere or in expressing contempt for Oxford education. The more superficial aspects of the character about town engaged attention. Thus, in Pierce Egan's *Tom and Jerry*, Bob Logic is an Oxonian in the rôle of town roysterer: "Logic, as the phrase goes, had received a college education, but those persons who were well acquainted with him seemed to hint, that he had rather been sent down to Oxford to have the *character* of the thing, than to astonish the world with any great works of intellectual profundity." Similarly, in Bulwer-Lytton's *Falkland* (1827) is disclosed a light opinion of the results of Oxonian education. "The fact is," said that languishing and Wertherian youth, "nothing seemed to me worth the labour of success. I

conversed with those who had obtained the highest academical reputation and I smiled with a consciousness of superiority at the boundlessness of their vanity, and the narrowness of their lives. The limits of the distinction they had gained seemed to them as wide as the most extended renown; and the little knowledge their youth had acquired only appeared to them an excuse for the ignorance and indolence of later years. Was it to equal these that I had to labour? I felt that I already surpassed them! Was it to gain good opinion, or, still worse, that of their admirers? Alas! I had too long to live for myself to find any happiness in the respect of the idlers I despised." To Disraeli's Vivian Grey, "the idea of Oxford was an insult."

*Reginald Dalton: A Tale of English Undergraduate Life* (1823) was the first novel of Oxford life. It was written by John Gibson Lockhart, who, as editor of the *Quarterly Review*, was a Conservative and therefore resented the strictures upon the Oxonian system printed in the pages of its rival, *The Edinburgh Review*. Lockhart himself had been a Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol College and therefore knew Oxford life at first hand. Although he gave some intimate scenes of Oxford, he, too, evidently believed that some reforms might be made. The catastrophe of his novel, so far as its Oxford section is concerned, was caused by two Oxford evils which he thought should be abolished: snobbishness and duelling. He made an earnest attempt to relate the misfortunes of an impoverished gentleman at the University who, under the perverse influence of a young Christ Church "blood," suffered a painful experience not greatly dissimilar to that which Fielding's "Man of the Hill" had suffered. When

Reginald Dalton fell in Oxonian social status because of his freshman extravagance and loose living, Lockhart put into his lips a diatribe against the exclusiveness and snobbery of Dalton's former comrades. The reforming tone, however, does not minimize the interest and importance of the book in its descriptions of Oxonian episodes — approaching Oxford by stagecoach, its town and gown riot, and undergraduate exploits — which were later to become conventions in the Oxford novel.

A slightly different aspect of the University was given in Robert Plumer Ward's *Tremaine: or the Man of Refinement* (1825). Ward, like Lockhart, had had the benefit of Oxonian residence and therefore described his academic community with some surety of touch but, unlike Lockhart, was uninterested in undergraduate episodes. His story is concerned with a Chesterfieldian worldling, considerably disillusioned as a result of his London social life. After a melancholy rejection in courtship, caused by his philosophical scepticism, he retired to Oxford in order to regain religious faith. To Tremaine, as to his creator, Oxford was a shrine of theology where logic and dialectics could conquer doubts concerning God, immortality, and the freedom of the will: hence, in this novel Oxford is a kind of secluded monastery where meditating dons chiefly occupied themselves with intricate and abstruse religious and philosophical questions. In a later novel, *De Clifford* (1842), Ward yielded to increasing criticism of Oxford's social exclusiveness, repeating Lockhart's criticism with a hero and plot not greatly unlike those of *Reginald Dalton.*

These novels of Lockhart and Ward are today merely historical curiosities. If they are compared with more

recent novels of Oxford they will be found to be considerably prosaic and clumsy. Neither Lockhart nor Ward was content to devote an entire novel to the Oxford scene. Both transplant their heroes to London for further experiences. They do not appear to believe that a novel concerned wholly with Oxford life would have been interesting to the novel-reading public of their generation. And yet, in spite of this hesitation, it may be said that they first ventured upon academic life as materials for fiction.

The next step in the establishment of the Oxford legend in the novel may be seen in the interesting but abortive efforts of Joseph J. H. Hewlett (1800–1847), a fictionist of no great importance except for his experiments in this field. He had had some interesting experiences himself as an Oxonian undergraduate and as headmaster of Abingdon Grammar School; his temperament was such that he found much pleasure in observing and living the robust, exuberant life of schoolboys and undergraduates, which appears as a new element in his sprightly *Life and Times of Peter Priggins, College Scout* (1841), published at a time when Tractarianism was focussing international attention upon Oxford. Straitened circumstances forced him to write fiction for a living after his disastrous failure at Abingdon; and for materials he worked up that which he best knew, schoolboy and college life.

In *Peter Priggins,* long a favorite with Oxonians and so mentioned in Henry Kingsley's *Ravenshoe,* Hewlett's object was to entertain his readers with a gay treatment of the lighter and happier aspects of Oxford life without any intention of criticism. "Many of the scenes as I have described them," he wrote in reply to his critics, "have

really been witnessed in Oxford . . . unsanctioned, of course, by the authorities. To please the taste of the public, which in these days requires highly seasoned dishes, it is absolutely necessary to embellish, or in the words of the critics . . . to overdraw and color. . . . As to critics' speculations about the good or harm likely to result from my stories of college life, I can only say that they were not written with a view of effecting any change whatever in the sentiment of the public towards the universities, but are merely meant to please readers." [5]

The confidential and intimate tone of *Peter Priggins* makes it somewhat spicy and racy reading even for modern readers who are more or less jaded by recent floods of college fiction. In spite of the fact that Hewlett had not yet evolved a technique of sustained and unified plot, the separate tales or yarns of which *Peter Priggins* is composed are told with entertaining dash and vigour. He was indeed extravagant with his materials. Many of his episodes are still capable of yielding plots for whole novels by themselves. One could easily indicate striking resemblances between them and many later stories of college and school life. Moreover to Hewlett belongs the credit of first introducing the novel reader to the actual speech of Oxonians; such colloquialisms as "common room," "buttery," "rusticate," "crimp," "pluck," and "scout" first appeared in his novels. Hewlett himself called attention to this fact in Part III of *Peter Priggins* in a dialogue between the scout's two friends, Dustler and Broome. By using the device of writing the imaginary confessions of a college "scout," he gave a view of Oxford as seen from below-stairs, and any one who has had any experience at all with

[5] *Peter Priggins*, Ch. V.

college life will at once see the possibilities for piquancy when that subject is a theme for discussion of college janitors. Hewlett himself probably had a fondness for physical violence in humour, an inordinate weakness for the obvious as seen in his habitual recourse to puns, a passion for the out-of-doors, and hearty devotion to sports; by making *Peter Priggins* his mouthpiece he could be relieved of the charge of indelicacy unbecoming a schoolmaster and Oxonian Master of Arts.

The tales in *Peter Priggins* and its sequels, *College Life: or the Proctor's Notebook* (1843) and *Great Tom of Oxford* (1845), are indicative of Hewlett's study and imitation of eighteenth century models. The Victorian age had, however, by this time been well under way; the Georgian age with its frivolities and superficialities was becoming a matter of history; manners and morals were undergoing a vast transformation; and even Hewlett's contemporaries raised eyebrows at his flippancies. "Some of my friends," he wrote apologetically, "tell me that my style is too broadly humorous for the present fastidious days. They say that it is quite allowable for the most delicate and polished personages to read and laugh at the pages of Smollett, Fielding, Swift, and Sterne, and others of the old school, who were not over-scrupulous in their descriptions, but positively wrong to patronize anyone who in these later times, has courage to call things by their right names." [6]

One of the most successful of several *jeux-d'esprit* in the Hewlett manner was *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* (1853), by Edward Bradley, a graduate of Durham University, who wrote under the suggestive pseudonym of

[6] *College Life:* Part III.

"Cuthbert Bede."[7] There is an interesting, though perhaps debatable, question as to whether or not Bradley was inspired to satire by Newman's idealisation of Oxford in *The Idea of a University*, which had been published the previous year and was then widely discussed. Certainly there are striking reminders in *Verdant Green* of ideas beautifully and clearly stated in Newman's classic. Newman, for instance, believed that the best type of education was that afforded by Oxford, which provided for free and enriching intercourse of ideas through the social contacts of undergraduates with each other and with dons.[8] Bradley put this concept into the discourse of one of his characters, Rev. Mr. Larkin, who counselled Verdant's mamma as follows: "It is not so much from what Verdant would learn in Latin and Greek, and such things as make up a part of education . . . but more from what he would gain by mixing with a large body of young men of his own age who would represent the best classes of a mixed society, and who may justly be regarded as a fair sample of its feelings and talents. . . . There is something in the very atmosphere of a university that seems to engender refined thoughts and noble feelings; and lamentable indeed must be the state of any young man who can pass through the three years of his college residence and bring away no higher aims, no worthier purposes, no better thoughts from all the holy associations which have so crowded upon him."

The purpose of *Verdant Green* was to show exactly what a young man would derive from his university experience

[7] "Suggestive," because it combined the names of the two saints buried at Durham, and conveys the views of Oxford held by a Durham University man.

[8] See later, Chapter II, pp. 50–51.

if it is limited to the society of undergraduates. When one inquires what were the feelings and aspirations aroused in *Verdant Green* by his Oxonian experiences, there is no difficulty in perceiving Bradley's ironic intention. Towards Oxford's venerable traditions and beauty, Verdant was utterly indifferent. His education in "manliness" took interesting turns. Safely installed in his rooms, he at once becomes the prize "gull" of his comrades. He learns to smoke, drink, and gamble; he buys a bulldog, indulges in flamboyant raiment, tries fancy horseback riding, is initiated into archery, cricket, billiards, and pool; takes lessons in boxing, tries oratory at the Union, visits the picture gallery at Blenheim, and finishes his classical education by mastering the art of flirtation. The effect of this training is thus summarized: "Mr. Verdant Green learned many things during his freshman's term, and among them discovered that the quiet retirement of college rooms, of which he had heard so much, was in many cases, an unsubstantial idea, founded on imagination, and built up in fancy." He "astonished his family with the extent of his learning, and proved how a youth of ordinary natural attainments may acquire other knowledge in his University career than what simply relates to classical."

Comparison of *Verdant Green* with *Peter Priggins* reveals many striking similarities both in material and in tone. Like Hewlett, Bradley depended for interest upon the dash and verve of his narrative and his command of low farce comedy. His novel at once attracted widespread attention when it was published because legislative efforts for Oxford Reform had made everything connected with the University of widespread interest. Although it is by no means a masterpiece of fiction, it has, nevertheless,

always enjoyed a continuous sale and is still being republished. No less competent a critic than Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has highly, almost extravagantly, praised it for its faithful representation of Oxford life, but one can hardly help wondering if it did not do much to idealise undergraduate exploits and nonchalance and so perpetuate them in the conventional notion of a collegian's life. "The Novel of University life," said Professor Quiller-Couch, "has not been written and perhaps never will be. I am not at all sure that *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* do not mark the nearest approach to it. . . . To begin with, *Verdant Green*, with all its faults, did contrive to be exceedingly youthful and high-spirited . . ." and because, one may add, it was so high-spirited it remains to this day an exceedingly pleasurable *jeu d'esprit*. Certainly among others of its class — Hilaire Belloc's *Lambkins' Remains*, Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*, and the recent *Oxford Circus* — it is not overshadowed.

An interesting example of changing attitude toward the University as manifested by those not immediately connected with it may be seen in novels written in the mid-century. The conflict between democratic and aristocratic forces, so eminent in the Victorian era, tended to throw into sharper light the traditionally aristocratic nature of Oxford. This was pointed out by the German historian, V. A. Hüber in his *English Universities* (1843, English ed.).[9] Beginning with *Coningsby* (1845), Disraeli manifested

[9] "Our (*viz.* German) Universities produced learned men in the several sciences, or men for practical life. . . . To study from the love of knowledge was generally out of the question on account of the prevailing poverty of the Germans; and even among the higher classes such an idea was seldom entertained. . . . The English Universities, on the contrary, content themselves with producing the first and distinctive flower of the national life, a well educated 'gentleman.' I cannot enter into any exact

an entirely changed attitude from that indicated in his *Vivian Grey*. There can hardly be much doubt that he owed this change of mind to his contacts with Bulwer-Lytton and to the latter's discussion of university education in *England and the English* (1833); to Hüber's history, and to his own contacts with university men as his political ambitions began to be realised. In his development of the political program of "Young-Englandism" no doubt he saw the need of adjusting his ideas concerning the efficacy of the English University system and of its ripe fruit, the English gentleman. Although none of his novels after 1845 specifically treated or described University life, except possibly in incidental and wholly unimportant chapters, his references and allusions thereafter were not only eminently respectable but even excessively laudatory. Through his elegant eyes one may see aristocratic youth then in the full glory of university experience highly idealised. Both Oxford and Cambridge became to him places of courtesy and elegance to which gentlemen resorted for that final polish and grace which gave them Disraelian manners. Collegians like Coningsby and Lothair are drawn to scale to fit Disraeli's purposes; they are lay figures of the salon and informed with ideas drawn from the political pages of Wentworth and Bolingbroke. To them, as to Disraeli, the ideal of the political state was

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definition of the old English gentleman, but I hope that no one need be offended by my saying that *we* have nothing of the kind. A Gentleman must possess a political character, an independent and public position, or at least the right of assuming it. He must farther have average opulence, with landed property of his own or in the family; he should also have bodily activity and strength, unattainable by our sedentary life in public offices. . . . No other nation produces the stock, and in England itself it has already much deteriorated." Hüber: *English Universities*, Vol. II, Part 1.

not that described by Aristotle or Plato, but what their creator saw in Venice of the Doges. They have no difficulty with dons, are never "rusticated," break no college windows, never supplant the driver of the Oxford mail, and never talk with dons about the state of their souls. Indeed, they have few questions about anything; on the contrary, they are quite assured and are nothing if not affirmative. Their view of life is largely a matter of wealth, philanthropic sentiments, and the probability of successful careers as Archbishops of Canterbury or Prime Ministers of England. Their imbecility is tellingly satirised in Thackeray's *Codlingsby*.

Novelists who were influenced by democratic and liberal ideas represented the real forces which in the middle of the century were re-making Oxford. Insurgent democracy is shown vividly in the fiction concerning university life written by Thackeray, Kingsley, and Hughes, who lived and wrote when the campaign for university reform was in full vigour. That interest in Oxford and Cambridge was no longer a parochial affair limited to their privileged precincts is strikingly revealed in one of Thackeray's musings in *Pendennis*: in which he calls attention to the affectionate sentiment with which university men regard their college days.[10] Thackeray, like his friends Kingsley and Hughes, was largely inspired by the efforts of the reformers — see, for instance, his devastating satires of various types of university cads in his *Book of Snobs* (1848), and his implied criticism of the low moral conditions in both Universities in Pendennis's unfortunate experiences. The diatribes which Kingsley uttered through his Alton Locke, and Thomas Hughes through Hardy (of

[10] *Pendennis:* Chapter XVII.

*Tom Brown at Oxford*) reflect very obviously the influences of the political liberals and the *Edinburgh Review*, but, on the other hand, from their own experience the authors were able to draw faithful and convincing pictures of university life.

Spiritual tendencies in pre-reform Oxford began to be described in the English novel just after Tractarianism had run its course. The first of these, James Anthony Froude's *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847) and *Nemesis of Faith* (1848) together with Newman's *Loss and Gain* (1848), reveal dominant influences upon the thought and conduct of Oxonians. The hero of Froude's *Nemesis of Faith*, was entirely unlike any fictive character in any previous imaginative treatment of Oxford. Mark Sutherland, chief character in the *Nemesis of Faith*, was temperamentally akin to Charles Redding of *Loss and Gain*, but whereas the former found himself between the crossfires of Newman and Carlyle, the latter was an out-and-out High Anglican, undisturbed by the political and social idealism of which Carlyle was then high priest. Clough's *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, appearing the same year as the two novels just mentioned, was another indication of the spiritual agitation then in process in the hearts of Oxonians. Two years later appeared Kingsley's *Yeast* (1850), in which Launcelot Smith, a patrician youth who had drifted aimlessly through his University course, suddenly was brought face to face with the "condition of England question" in a manner somewhat similar to that which Tom Brown met when he found Harry Winburn to embody that problem.

*Tom Brown at Oxford*, indeed, marks the high point of the Oxford novel. It was, obviously, no "sport," in the

biological sense, but had evident relationships to novels already cited. By combining the principal elements of some of them, it established a new *genre* in fiction. It was, like *The Nemesis of Faith*, *Loss and Gain*, and *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, a revelation of Oxonian thought in the mid-century; it had the social theme of *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, the Arnoldian love of manly sports of Clough's vacation pastoral, the lighter side of college life as manifested in *Peter Priggins* and *Verdant Green;* and the more or less conventional theme of Oxford snobbishness so tellingly criticised in Lockhart's *Reginald Dalton* and Ward's *De Clifford*. But it added a new element: that of affection for Oxford's *genius loci*. It is this element, perhaps, more than any other which still makes it loved and read. So happy was its success that when Taine visited England during the decade of the seventies, he was told that the three novels which most adequately reflected Oxford life and character were *Verdant Green*, *Pendennis*, and *Tom Brown*.[11]

Novels which have since been published on Oxford generally reflect the effects of the various winds of doctrine which swept over the University. Thus Mrs. Humphrey Ward's *Robert Elsmere* is an interesting revelation of the spiritual struggles of a young rationalist theologian who, in his contacts with great teachers of the Jowett and Pattison type, developed a strong social humanitarianism. Julian Sturgis's slight novel, *John-a-Dreams*, and his more ambitious *Stephen Calinari*, disclose the flower of aestheticism in Oxford. Although not strictly Oxford novels, William Hurrell Mallock's *New Republic* and *The New Paul and Virginia* are clever satires on various tendencies

[11] Taine: *Notes sur L'Angleterre.*

of Victorian Oxford opinion. In the former, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Pater, and Jowett are tellingly parodied; and in the latter Frederic Harrison's fervent evangel in the cause of Positivism is amusingly burlesqued. J. H. Shorthouse's *John Inglesant,* "a philosophical romance," attempted to revive a vivid sense of intellectual influences in Oxford of the seventeenth century. With the development of knowledge of and interest in the history of Oxford many other historical romances of the University's earlier days were written but they are otherwise of slight importance. That the field has great possibilities even today and is not limited to English-speaking peoples, is indicated in the fact that recently there was published for French readers a novel of Oxford life in their own language.

Perhaps the most ambitious of recent Oxford novels is Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street* (1913), in which the hero, Michael Fane, has contact with various vagaries which were surging into pre-bellum Oxford. So vividly did that novel make Oxford's *genius loci* familiar to our generation that it, in turn, inspired many of those novels of English and American college life which one today may pick up on any newsstand. If Mr. Scott Fitzgerald was not influenced by it in writing his *This Side of Paradise,* his novel of Princeton is at any rate strikingly similar in tone and attitude. Just as *Tom Brown at Oxford* probably gave Mr. Ralph Henry Barbour his cue for the latter's prolific series of novels of undergraduate life in America, so Mackenzie has inspired many recent college novels like *The Plastic Age, Town and Gown,* and *Grey Spires.*

In Beverly Nichol's *Patchwork* (1922), marvellously well-named, the influence of Mackenzie's novel is only too

obvious. The hero of *Patchwork,* Raymond Sheldon, is a snobbish young dilettante who entered Oxford after war experience. After some discouraging efforts to discover the Oxford ideally described in *Sinister Street,* he reached this ambitious resolution: "Why should not he, alone except for a few faithful spirits, create once again the Oxford that had been?" . . . "In any case what was the use of trying to work in an Oxford which was thoroughly and radically wrong? The more he read 'Sinister Street' the more was he conscious of a great heritage which he had lost, a great glory which had passed him by. Oxford was wrong, and it was no use pretending that it was not." Throughout the novel, Mr. Nichols, with his mind charged with musical and coloured sentences from Mackenzie's novel, repeats what any one may find in a number of Oxford novels since *Tom Brown — The Progress of Hugh Rendall; Keddy; Within Sound of Great Tom; Hugh Heron Christ Church; The Comedy of Age; Sandford of Merton; Godfrey Martin, Undergraduate; Faucit of Balliol; The Inseparables; The Lost Stradivarius.* "It was in days like that," wrote Mr. Nichols, "when Oxford had really been Oxford, days when one could abandon oneself without interruption to a mood, days such as Michael Fane had known in his primrose passage through Sinister Street, which Raymond longed above all things to recapture." In spite of the novelist's earnestness, however, his effort makes one suspect that he seriously lacked a sense of humour. He did not discriminate sufficiently. That glamour which glorifies Oxford is the work of imagination, the work of poets and of novelists, and may be apprehended only by those whose poetic minds are balanced by a vivid sense of the interaction of the real and the ideal.

Unwittingly he revealed that sentiment for Oxford is, if not legendary, itself the result of a legend. The work which he proposed for his hero was to rehabilitate the legend which a more prosaic age had stripped of its illusions. Is it any wonder, then, that *Patchwork* was good-naturedly caricatured by more sensible, if less reverent novelists, Hamish Miles and Raymond Mortimer, in *The Oxford Circus* (1923) whose *jeu d'esprit* on the Oxford legend is as merry and effective in its way as were Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1908) or George Calderon's *Downy V. Green* (1903) in theirs?

Out of the considerable number of treatments of Oxford in the Victorian novel, one stands out with striking prominence: Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Under the slightly veiled name of "Christminster," Oxford in Hardy's beautiful novel is symbolised as the goal of Jude Fawley's hopes. The narration of Jude's frustrated ambition to rise from the lower classes through the privilege of University residence was not particularly flattering to Christminster, which rejected him. Nevertheless Christminster is glowingly revealed. To Jude, as to many others who had deeply drunk of its beauty and who knew its legend, Oxford was "the golden city on the world's rim." The scene in which he walked "about Zion and measured the towers thereof," when he fondly mused on the richness of experience and the broadening of spirit which would be his when he too was capped and gowned, is, when considered against the tragic background of his later career, poignantly pathetic. His experiences in contact with the University lift into high light the long and bitter struggle of the unprivileged to enjoy Oxford life; both Kingsley and Hughes had touched upon it, but it remained

for Hardy to make of the theme a work of consummate art.

With Arnold's two famous poems and Hardy's first chapter of the second book of *Jude the Obscure*, the legend of Oxford was perfectly articulated and made vocal. They indicate how affection for the place, once exclusively a sentiment of the privileged members of Oxonian colleges, has overflowed its parochial dykes and become part of the spiritual heritage of the modern world.

## Chapter II

## *THE TRIUMPH OF HUMANISM*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the profound social transformation which accompanied England's change from an agricultural to an industrial nation had tremendous effects upon Oxford. Factories increased at a remarkable rate, cities sprang up almost overnight, canals were built to facilitate inland commerce, roads were improved for mails and coaches, and overseas trade produced a new and powerful class. Since Elizabethan times, the territorial aristocracy with loyal Anglican and Tory affiliations had had complete control of the University except possibly during the Cromwellian interlude. The break-up of the old order threatened disaster to their time-honored customs and acceptances. Radical thinkers like Godwin began to demand the modification of many of their venerable institutions, previously regarded as sacrosanct, in order to adjust them to meet new conditions. And, of course, both Oxford and Cambridge came within the range of criticism. The Universities were criticised for lack of practical results, their critics insisting that both they and their adjuncts, the Public Schools, be reformed in order that they might be made more serviceable to the nation.

If these changes were noticed and these voices heard in Oxford, no very serious attention was paid to them. The University feared no interruption or interference with its established order, for the whole procedure of its life and

customs was minutely prescribed by Royal Statutes drawn up by Archbishop Laud in the time of Charles I. As these Statutes were then interpreted, no power except the Crown could alter its system or structure, and there was no likelihood that the reigning Sovereign could be persuaded to exercise his prerogative. Consequently, Oxford continued to remain aloof, having, indeed, some connection with national life chiefly through the influence of those of its sons who were clergymen in various parts of the land; but if one is to accept the testimony of Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, that influence was negligible. Dean Church's description of pre-Tractarian Oxford is classic. "Oxford," he wrote, "was as like as it could be in our modern world to a Greek *polis*, or an Italian self-centered city of the Middle Ages, living a life of its own, unlike that of any other spot in England, with its privileged powers, and exemptions from the general law, with its special mode of government and police, its usages and tastes and traditions, and even costume, which the rest of England looked at from the outside, much interested, but much puzzled, or knew only by transient visits." [1]

Although nominally it was a University, Oxford was in reality a colony of colleges in a quaint medieval town untouched by the new social and industrial forces. Whatever else it was, it was not a place of research or of independent thinking. The university system of the Middle Ages had decayed even though it functioned somewhat mechanically in occasional academic processions and in routine examinations whose questions and answers were known beforehand by all who sought degrees. In the course of several centuries, most of the colleges became

[1] R. W. Church: *Oxford Movement*, p. 159.

extremely rich through the accumulation of magnificent endowments and gifts; a wealth which in large measure caused their evils. Education was entirely in the hands of college tutors who were ordained clergymen, merely performing the duties of tuition until they were relieved by appointment to lucrative benefices. When teaching was thus restricted to those who regarded their duties as an unpleasant interlude, the scholarly atmosphere declined to a scandalous state. The twenty colleges, each practically autonomous, were by Statute required to teach the elements of religion, a little mathematics, and a few Greek and Roman classics, among which Aristotle's *Logic* was given the chief place. In reality, however, they were congregations of fortunate individuals, all members of the Established Church, who, with the possible exception of poor students known as "servitours," attended the University merely as fulfilling a social and traditional obligation of their class.

Such a situation, obviously, was intolerable. Some stringent criticisms had been made in the eighteenth century, but they were without serious effect. In *The Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith gave considerable space to a comparison of both Oxford and Cambridge with Continental Universities, reaching the conclusion that "for a long time there has been no pretence of teaching at Oxford." As if in concrete illustration of this statement, Edward Gibbon in his *Autobiography* graphically sketched the devastating lassitude which prevailed in his college while he was an undergraduate, saying in effect that Oxford was a place of "port and prejudice," much given to satisfaction over its "monkish reliques."

No doubt these and other criticisms were responsible for

efforts which were being made at the turn of the century by the heads of three Colleges — Christ Church, Oriel, and Balliol — to rectify conditions within their own walls. The outside world however was not aware of any such effort. Hardly had the first decade of the century begun when outside reformers took up the matter. From 1808 to 1810, the newly-founded *Edinburgh Review* printed a series of book reviews in which the writers took occasion to criticise both Universities but especially Oxford. In calling attention to the lack of utility of university studies, they said, "We believe that it is chiefly in the public institutions of England that we are to seek for the causes of the deficiency of scientific knowledge in England, and particularly in the two great centres from which knowledge is supposed to radiate over all the rest of the island. In one of these, where the dictates of Aristotle are still listened to as infallible decrees, and where the infancy of science is mistaken for its maturity, the mathematical sciences have never flourished; and the scholar has no means of advancing beyond the mere elements of geometry."[2]

Although the *Edinburgh* Reviewers were probably not ignorant of earlier criticisms, they stressed other matters, particularly the need for the study of science. Whereas Adam Smith and Gibbon believed that the restoration of the defunct professorial system would have immediate beneficial results, the Reviewers chiefly objected to the waste of time involved in the exclusive attention paid by both Universities, particularly Oxford, to classic literature. The cleverest of the Reviewers, the wit Sydney Smith,

[2] *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. XI, p. 283. Also see reviews in January, 1808, July, 1809, and October, 1809, numbers of the same periodical for other criticisms.

reduced the idea of Oxford education to an absurdity. "There never was a more complete instance in any country," he wrote, "of such extravagant and overacted attachment to any branch of knowledge as that which obtains in this country with regard to classical literature. A young Englishman goes to school at six or seven years of age; and he remains in a course of instruction until twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. In all that time his sole and exclusive occupation is learning Latin and Greek; he has scarcely noticed that there is any other kind of excellence; and the great system of facts with which he is most perfectly acquainted is the intrigues of the heathen Gods, with whom Pan slept? with whom Jupiter? whom Apollo ravished? . . . His object is not to reason, to imagine, or to invent; but to conjugate, decline, and derive. The situations of imaginary glory which he draws to himself, are a detection of an anapest in the wrong place, or the restoration of a dative case which Cranzius passed over, and the never dying Ernesti failed to observe." Indeed the Reviewers went further: they questioned the accuracy of what they contemptuously called "Oxonian Latin," and based their insistence for reform upon the assumption that the Universities were *national* institutions and therefore subject to Parliamentary control.

The cumulative effect of the *Edinburgh* strictures drew forth an earnest and dignified reply from the Oxonian Professor of Poetry, Edward Coplestone. In 1810, Professor Coplestone published his *Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review* which, with its review by his Oriel colleague John Davison in the *Quarterly* of the same year, served as an outline for John Henry Newman when he prepared his lectures, a half century later, on "The

Idea of a University." Newman's account of the controversy is interesting. "Hardly," he wrote, "had the authorities of that ancient seat of learning, waking from their long neglect, set on foot a plan for the education of the youth committed to them, than the representatives of science and literature in the city which has sometimes been called the Northern Athens, remonstrated, with their gravest arguments and their most brilliant satire, against the direction and shape which the reform was taking. . . . Accordingly, they were encountered in behalf of the University by two men of great name and influence in their day . . . and the defence thus provided for the Oxford studies has kept its ground to this day."[3] "Controversy," continued Newman, "did but bring more clearly to its own apprehension the views on which its reformation was proceeding, and throw them into a philosophical form."

The tone of Coplestone's pamphlet, in spite of a stylistic restraint, was plainly militant, revealing the exasperated temper of a conservative scholar who was not only impatient with any suggestion of Oxford's incompetency but who was insistent upon his point that the University had a great stabilizing power in a time of great social and political uncertainty. At such a time, when Napoleon was engaging all of the forces of England in resistance, was it wise to undermine faith in England's noblest institutions? In the course of his argument he called attention to the great educational value of literature and logic and contrasted them with science to the latter's disadvantage. He also corrected the mistaken notion entertained by the *Edinburgh* Reviewers that Oxford was a *national* institution responsible to the nation or to Parliament to account

[3] Newman: *Idea of a University*, pp. 156–157.

for its activities. He defined Oxford as a "congeries of colleges." "The University of Oxford," he wrote, "is *not* a national foundation. It is a congeries of foundations, originating some in royal munificence, but more in private piety and bounty. They are moulded, indeed, into one corporation; but each of our twenty colleges is a corporation by itself, and has its own peculiar Statutes, not only regulating its internal affairs, but confining its benefits by a great variety of limitations." [4]

The issue was thus clearly marked between the defenders of the University and those who, thereafter, sought to nationalise it. The former worked to maintain the dominancy of the colleges and the system of classical studies which they maintained; while the latter sought to diminish the power of the colleges by reviving and strengthening the University professoriate, thus providing opportunity for increasing the study of science. The reformers became so determined to nationalise, secularise, and modernise Oxford that, in the course of time, they drew the fire of the Tractarian party who desired neither the modification of the existing collegiate system nor the revival of the professorial.

On the eve of the launching of the Tractarian movement, the *Edinburgh Review* again raised the issue of university reform, but this time it was directed against Coplestone's contention that Oxford was not a national institution. It also attacked his other point; that Oxford was a "congeries of colleges." In June, 1831, Sir William Hamilton, who had been a Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol, contributed the first of four fairly comprehensive essays, which appeared at intervals until 1834. While his *Edin-*

[4] Coplestone: *Reply*, p. 183.

*burgh* predecessors had attacked the "inutility" of Oxford studies, Hamilton assailed the aristocratic and ecclesiastical restrictions which made Oxford the center of party movements in politics and religion. Among other items, he urged the abolition of subscription at matriculation to the Thirty-nine Articles, which restricted religious belief to the Anglican creed. Instead of comparing Oxford and Cambridge with continental universities, or pointing out what they might do by increasing "professorial" subjects in the Oxford curriculum, he introduced the historical method of treating the questions at issue, and showed how, through the growth of the colleges, the medieval university had been supplanted. By this new method he contributed a vivid view of the evolution of Oxford into a dual system; that of the University *de jure* and the collegiate, *de facto*. His object was to show that the colleges had gained an unwarrantable ascendancy at the expense of the University proper; that this ascendancy was "new and inexpedient, not only accidental to the University, without legal sanction, but radically subversive of law, arrogating the privileges exclusively conceded to another system, which it superseded, and so far from being defensible by those it profits, as a right, that it was a flagrant usurpation obtained through perjury, and only tolerated through neglect." [5]

Hamilton's essays served to spur liberals to agitate for university reform. From 1834, when Renn Dickson Hampden, Professor of Moral Philosophy, published a pamphlet urging the abolition of subscription to the articles

[5] Quoted in Tillyard: *History of University Reform*, W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., Cambridge, 1913, pp. 37–38. For another treatment of the reform see Lewis Campbell's *The Nationalisation of the Old English Universities*, Chapman & Hall, London, 1901.

of faith at matriculation, to 1850, when Lord John Russell succeeded in having the Queen appoint a Royal Commission to study the condition of Oxford and to recommend changes, the reform movement was carried on by two parties: that within Oxford, which as time went on tended to have its headquarters at Balliol College, and that which was active in Parliament. Simultaneously Tractarians zealously worked to counteract them, making the issue to be this: was Oxford to continue to be strictly an Anglican academy in which theology was to remain "the queen of the sciences," or was it to be a universal institution of learning in which theology was to be but a part, and possibly a continually diminishing part, of the field of study? The conflict between the two parties made the issue a national question, engaging the attention of many not officially connected with the University. Public interest in the state and activities of Oxford became widespread, voiced in the press and in controversial pamphlets. The discussion served as the school of inquiry in which ideas on education were clarified and the philosophy upon which Oxford rested was comprehensively envisaged.

On April 17, 1834, a Bill was moved in the House of Commons to present an address to the King for the removal of religious tests in both Universities, exception being made for candidates for divinity degrees. This was obviously one of the results of Sir William Hamilton's essays in the *Edinburgh Review*. Gladstone, who had entered Parliament two years before, was prominent in opposing the Bill; he had not yet experienced that change of heart which was later to make him one of the chief agents for carrying the Reform to fruition. After three readings, the Bill was carried in Commons, but it later failed to pass in the House

of Lords, where it was introduced by a Liberal nobleman, William Pleyne Bouverie, Earl of Radnor. Earl Radnor re-submitted his Bill on June 11, 1835, but it was again defeated. The opposition revealed the result of Tractarian propaganda. So strong was this influence, that Liberals quickly saw the futility of trying to make headway against it until the strength of their opponents was undermined.

Like most reformers, they went straight for their object without considering the strength of their opponents and again, like most reformers, selected for attack the very issue which was sure to arouse bitter antagonism even in those who might have wished for reform to begin with less precious matters. It was necessary, therefore, if the matter was not entirely to be lost, to change the attack and make it a flank movement instead of a frontal. The Earl of Radnor, consequently, made a third effort in 1837 when he presented a Bill which petitioned the King to appoint a Commission to inquire into the amount, nature, and application of the estates and funds of the Colleges and Halls of the Universities, and also into the administration of the affairs of each College and Hall for the purpose of determining how these estates and funds "might be made more conducive to the objects intended by the founders and benefactors, and for which they are endowed."[6] This Bill was shelved for six months by Coplestone, who since his reply to the *Edinburgh* critics had been translated to the Bishopric of Llandaff. A similar Bill, presented in the House of Commons by the Hon. George Pryme, Professor of Political Economy in Cambridge and member for the Borough of Cambridge, was withdrawn when the Member

[6] Tillyard: p. 59.

for the University of Cambridge stated that the Universities themselves would make changes in their Statutes, thus avoiding the question of external interference with their affairs.

Thereupon Parliamentary debate ceased for a short period. The Universities were made responsible for their own reforms. Some notable efforts were subsequently made in both Oxford and Cambridge to clean the Augean stables, but with slight success because reactionaries stubbornly resisted. In Oxford agitation eddied about the question of the revival of the professoriate. "In 1839," wrote Sir Charles Lyell, "a last and most vigorous attempt was made at Oxford to restore the functions of the professorial body, which had now become contracted within the narrowest limits. The Professors of Experimental Philosophy, Comparative Anatomy, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Geology, Botany, Geometry, and Astronomy, sent in a representation to the Heads of Houses, in which they declared their inability to discharge the duties which they had undertaken, notwithstanding their unabated zeal and devotion. . . . A majority of the Heads of Houses were favorable to a reform, and consequently proposed a new examination statute, in which there was a provision requiring attendance on at least two of professorial lectures, as a preliminary qualification for the Bachelor of Arts degree. . . . But it was too late, reform was beyond their power." [7] More important than actual evidences of reform was the large number of pamphlets printed between 1837 and 1850 on various topics of university objects and methods, written by members of the two Universities, most important of which were those written by Professor

[7] Lyell: *Travels in North America*, pp. 291–294.

William Whewell of Cambridge. His *Of a Liberal Education* and *The Study of Mathematics* presented the humanistic interpretation of education from a distinctly Cantabrigian point of view.

Parliamentary Liberals, having bided their time until the power of the Tractarian party was sapped, saw their opportunity to renew their efforts in 1842, when their adversaries suffered three disastrous defeats. In the same year Newman retired to his retreat at Littlemore, the first sign of the decline of his power in University affairs. In 1843, therefore, Mr. Christie of Weymouth again moved in Commons for " leave to bring in a Bill to abolish certain oaths and subscriptions to the Universities " and to extend their privileges to persons who were not members of the Established Church. His measure failed by a vote of 175 to 105. The figures indicate a remarkable change of sentiment. Christie again attempted to break the *impasse* in May, 1844, this time presenting a Bill which duplicated the Earl of Radnor's presented in 1834, petitioning the Queen to appoint a Commission to investigate the state of Oxford. While Christie was speaking in support of his Bill, the House was counted out. He presented the same Bill again in April, 1845, but it was defeated by the Members for the two Universities. That, however, was their last success in withstanding external action.

Change in the internal condition and affairs of Oxford made it evident that concerted opposition to reform could not continue much longer. In February, 1845, Newman formally withdrew both from Oxford and from the Church of England. The subsequent " Roman slide," the wholesale withdrawal of Tractarians from both Church and University, broke the strength of his Party. Those of

his followers who remained faithful to the Established Church soon realised the necessity of recuperating their forces if they were to withstand the imminent possibility of Liberal triumph in the matter of university reform. Under the leadership of E. B. Pusey, the eminent Tractarian scholar and divine, thirty-two peers — members of Parliament, and clergy — met in the summer of 1845 at the home of Lord Sandon in London in order to present a memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, who had intimated that he was favorably disposed to consider any recommendation they might make. Pusey was unable to attend the meeting. Gladstone, who was present, took a prominent part and made radical proposals. Largely under his influence the group drew up a statement which seemed to Pusey to defeat the very purpose for which the meeting was called. The memorial which the members presented urged the University to make changes which would increase the number of undergraduates by opening new Halls and reducing expenses. If the petition was favorably acted upon, Pusey believed, it would inevitably lead to a diminution of religious interests in the University.[8]

In the meanwhile, Parliamentary debate went on. Mr. Christie continued to make annual efforts to push his Bill for the appointment of a Royal Commission. Perversely enough, although his persistence was unrewarded, unexpected success came on April 23, 1850, in connection with a motion presented by James Heywood, member for North Lancashire. Heywood's Bill, with some slight modifications, was substantially identical with those previously presented by the Earl of Radnor and Mr. Christie. Lord

[8] *Life of Pusey:* III, p. 83.

John Russell, then Prime Minister, made the announcement that though he could not accept the motion, the Government itself would, as an alternative, counsel Her Majesty to appoint a Royal Commission for the investigation of the two old Universities. Legal evidence which had accumulated during the long effort for university reform made it evident that action could not be effected by Parliament, that it was solely a Royal Prerogative.

The Prime Minister's ingenuity, therefore, cleared up the situation. His device, it was evident, made university reform no less an affair of Government but at the same time it was made to conform with law. This was a nice legal distinction. It precipitated, however, a fundamental question of British constitutional law as interesting in its way as the famous Dartmouth Case of 1820 is in American constitutional law. Mr. Roundell Palmer objected to Lord John Russell's proposal on the ground that it was illegal and therefore moved the adjournment of debate. The Attorney-General, Sir John Jervis, explained that the suggested Commission would not have power to act but would only receive evidence from University authorities voluntarily given. But the motion to adjourn was carried.

There the matter rested until May 8. In the meantime the Prime Minister personally wrote to the Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge explaining the nature of the proposed Commission and assuring them that the utmost care would be taken in the selection of its members. "There had been method in the choice of the Chancellors," wrote Tillyard, "the Duke of Wellington for Oxford, and Prince Albert for Cambridge. The Universities had not neglected the more obvious means of resisting the attacks

of their assailants." [9] Prince Albert replied that although he had hoped the Universities might have been permitted to carry on their reforms in their own way without external assistance, he believed nevertheless since the Government was pledged to an Investigating Commission that the proposal would be received in a friendly spirit. So armed, Lord John Russell proposed to win the Queen's consent to appoint the Commission. Gladstone, who had succeeded Sir Robert Inglis in 1849 as Member for the University of Oxford, supported an amendment to Heywood's Bill made by John Stuart to the effect that any advice given to the Queen to appoint the Commission was "a violation of the laws and constitution of Her kingdom, and the rights and liberties of Her Majesty's subjects." This, said Lord Morley, was "the last manifesto, on a high theme and on a broad scale, of the Toryism from which this wonderful pilgrim had started on his shining progress." [10]

The Queen consented to the Prime Minister's suggestion, and appointed the Commission for the Investigation of Oxford on August 30, 1850. It consisted of eight members, with Arthur Penrhyn Stanley as its secretary. Professor Goldwin Smith, eminent for his courage and ability, was later added as Assistant Secretary. For two years the Commission engaged in a very searching and comprehensive study of the problem, meeting with considerable indifference if not hostility in the course of its work, publishing its formidable Report on April 27, 1852; "perhaps," said the present Archbishop of Canterbury, "from a literary point of view, the most remarkable blue-book of our time." [11] Stanley's biographer said that it was "a

[9] Tillyard: *History of University Reform*, footnote, p. 105.
[10] John Morley: *Life of Gladstone*, I: 498.
[11] R. T. Davidson: *Life of Archbishop Tait*, I: 165.

remarkable document which formed an era in constitutional history, and furnished a precedent to be followed in dealing with the great institutions of the country." [12]

The work of preparing a Bill incorporating some of the suggestions made by the Commissioners fell upon Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Aberdeen's cabinet. Fortunately Gladstone, no longer opposed to University Reform, wished to see that the integrity and traditions of the University were safeguarded in legislation. In the midst of excitement and responsibilities caused by the Crimean War, he threw all of his energies into the work of drafting his Bill, getting suggestions from all quarters. He sent the rough draft of the Bill to Lord John Russell, who presented it in the House of Commons on March 17, 1854. On April 27, the Bill was sent to a Select Committee from which, although it aroused stormy discussion, it emerged safely. On June 1st Lord John Russell announced that the Government proposed to introduce clauses giving the Commissioners power to make Statutes for the Colleges under certain restrictions. The Bill was finally passed and received Royal Assent on August 7, 1854, when it was enacted into law.

The controversy was not, however, settled by that Act. Its result, said Mark Pattison, "was a drawn battle. The Colleges were not remodelled, nor did they lose a shilling of their property. Every one felt that this first baffled attempt was but a prelude." [13] Thereafter, until 1877, assaults were made on the Colleges in order to appropriate some of their funds by which it was proposed to strengthen the professoriate and to endow research. In 1877, the

[12] Prothero: *Life of Dean Stanley*, I: 432.
[13] Mark Pattison: *Endowment of Research*, p. 2.

Conservative Government under the Prime Ministership of Disraeli, repeated its act of a decade earlier when it enacted the Liberal Reform Bill. Again it stole "the thunder" of the Liberal Party by enacting the Oxford and Cambridge Universities Act which settled the matter of the relationship between the Colleges and the University. In 1881, clerical restrictions imposed on tutors were abolished. By that time Oxford was thoroughly nationalised. Thus were settled the questions raised in 1831 by Sir William Hamilton. Forty-six years of discussion and agitation established certain points, some of which may be briefly stated: that the Universities were national institutions and not the exclusive monopoly of any Church or political party; that their reform could at any time be accelerated or aided by Parliamentary assistance; that the University as such and the Colleges as such were integrally related; that the academic language should be English and not Latin; that sinecures were to be abolished; and that teaching was not to be restricted to clergymen.

Out of the vast literature which the controversy inspired, the outstanding achievement was Newman's *Idea of a University*, delivered as lectures in 1850 and 1851, and published in book form in 1852 almost simultaneously with the publication of the Royal Commission's Report. Although the lectures were addressed to a Catholic University in Ireland, Newman knew that his observations would be more widely noticed than by the immediate group to which they were delivered. As he explained in his introduction, he was both summarising the arguments for a liberal education such as that which he had himself experienced in Oxford, and replying to the various arguments of those opposing it. His purpose therefore was to sum up

the conservative view of liberal education at a time when political Liberalism threatened utterly to destroy it. He had before him, as he composed his lectures, the outlines of defence of the Oxford scheme which Coplestone and Davison had written in reply to the first *Edinburgh* criticisms. He also had Whewell's essays, and those written by Pusey and others. But Newman was no slavish compiler of other men's opinions, however much he was indebted to them. What he said in this book as in his other work was marked by his own superb genius: it was an enduring work of art.

Newman had thoroughly grasped the situation to which he applied himself, had thought his way through its amazing intricacy, had carefully weighed its various arguments, and, with the background of his own tumultuous Oxford experience, attacked the question with the finesse of a master logician. The *Idea of a University* was not, then, a mere *tour de force* of a recondite scholar who approached his problem from the ivory tower of monastic isolation. It had not only a defensive but a creative intention. Not only did Newman wish to resist the triumphant progress of utilitarianism and specialised training in education, but he wished to re-envisage that philosophy of humanism which Oxford, in the long course of its development, had so successfully evolved.

Although *The Idea of a University* is primarily a discussion of educational theory, its fascination for the general reader endures because it so eminently displays the qualities of a true work of literary excellence: thorough knowledge and control of its subject matter and a power of expressing it simply, cogently, and tactfully. When it was published it was appropriated by Oxonians and the de-

fenders of the humanities everywhere as a *vade mecum*, as the classic summary of their position. During the last half century it has served incalculably to resuscitate and extend the idea of liberal culture. Its influence in Oxford can hardly be over-estimated. It rationalised that sentiment, so dear to Oxonians, often referred to as "genius loci," raising it through clarity and force to a plane of consciousness not previously attained. Its effects may also be seen in Arnold's *Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis*, in Pater's *Emerald Uthwart*, in many of Lionel Johnson's poems, and in Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.

The non-Catholic reader, however indifferent he may be towards Newman's theological prepossessions, is no less than his Catholic friends rewarded by considering *The Idea of a University* in its entirety and in its historical setting. So viewed, it was as integral a part of the Tractarian movement as was Newman's *Arians of the Fourth Century* or the *Oxford Sermons*, because it sums up the Catholic view which Newman and his friends held in common concerning the ideal of Oxford. Hence an emphasis upon theology as the central core of university teaching begins and ends it. Its main outlines had already been suggested in various ways in the *Oxford Sermons*, but there they had been somewhat tentative. That complete detachment which was necessary for an impartial and comprehensive critique Newman had not found while he was engaged in his Oxford struggles, but in his new office addressing a sympathetic group of Catholic listeners he was enabled to re-state the Catholic basis of the traditional Oxonian education.

Whatever else, Newman insisted, a university education should do, it should develop and preserve the courtly

manners of a gentleman. Culture and the development of spiritual graces were its supreme ends. This is the idea of Oxford: to produce gentlemen. A gentleman is "one who never inflicts pain. . . . He is mainly occupied in removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. . . . He carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; — all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. He has eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him. . . . He is patient, forbearing, and resigned, on philosophical principles. If he engages in controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from blundering discourtesy of better, perhaps, but less educated minds. . . . He respects piety and devotion; he even supports institutions as venerable, beautiful or useful, to which he does not assent. . . ." Who, except Aristotle in his definition of the magnanimous man, has ever offered a better proposal of what education should effect?

His description of the ideal university is no less inspir-

ing. "An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his case he only pursues a few sciences out of a multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, and the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called 'liberal.' A habit of mind is formed which lasts throughout life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom." [14] The university may exist, he says, even if there be no one to teach the young men. "When a multitude of young men, keen, open-hearted, sympathetic, and observant, as young men are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn from each other . . . the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain for themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles of judging and acting, day by day. . . . It is seeing the world on a small field with little trouble; for the pupils or students come from very different places with widely different notions, and there is much to generalise, much to adjust, much to eliminate, there are inter-relations to be defined and conventional

[14] *Idea of a University*, Disc. V, Sec. I, pp. 101–102.

rules to be established, in the process by which the whole assemblage is moulded together, and gains one tone and one character" [15]

The radical distinction which Newman made between the formal instruction of a university, and the informal intercourse of an assemblage of students, gives a hint of the strong formative power which Oxford exercised even in the days of its most lamentable decline as a place of scholarship. He himself knew its power from his personal experience. For he had been made by Oxford's *genius loci;* and one of his chief ambitions was to make it equally effective in shaping the minds and spirits of those whom he attracted. *Genius loci* was, he insisted, the living teaching of the University. He re-vitalised it and made it one of the causes of the remarkable rise of Oxford as a collective power in Victorian literature. Through his influence not only was Oxford spiritually elevated but it was also made to be an arena, a theatre, of discussion in which minds were formed according to the provisions of the spirit of the place.

[15] *Ibid:* Disc. VI, Sec. 9, p. 146.

## Chapter III

## *NEWMAN*

The first sign of Oxford's intellectual awakening in the nineteenth century was associated with the revival of serious and intensive study of Aristotle. How low the study had fallen may be seen in the fact that, since the middle of the eighteenth century, the accepted manual was Henry Aldrich's emasculated edition of the *Logic*. In 1809 examination upon the Greek text of Aristotle was made compulsory in the Final Schools for all candidates for the B.A. degree.

This revival was accompanied by a tendency towards rationalism as the dons of Oriel College, inspired by their fresh studies of Aristotle, indulged in free and, to the orthodox, audacious speculations. Since these dons were all clergymen, their inquiries were largely confined to theology and they made no attempt to publish their views systematically outside of Oxford. Yet when it was discovered that their activities tended to weaken the doctrine of the Established Church another movement arose in Oxford as a reaction; a movement of religious thought which has left an enduring impression.

The Aristotelian movement was at first confined to Oriel. In 1795 an important change was made in the method of electing Fellows to its Foundation, by means of which in the first quarter of the century, Oriel attracted some of the most brilliant graduates who, on becoming tutors, in-

troduced new methods of teaching and a fresh spirit of interest in their work. Through the large number of their pupils who gained "first class honours" in the Final Schools they raised Oriel to the position of being "the blue ribbon college" of Oxford. Their eager discussions in the Common Room gained for them the title of "The Noetics" in university circles.

The most prominent members of this group were Edward Coplestone, Richard Whateley, Thomas Arnold, Edward Hawkins, Joseph Blanco White, and Renn Dickson Hampden. They were religious liberals who, within the limits imposed by orthodox Anglicanism, discussed many theological questions with a freedom which was then rare. They were not at all interested in restoring the Anglican idea of the Catholic Church which had lapsed since the time of Edward VI, but believed that the Established Church as it was then constituted needed no intensification of the principle of exclusiveness, that it had within it an inherent principle of expansion which needed only to be exercised through free inquiry and fellowship to make it effective as an influence for progress, that the "utility" of the Church — to use Dr. Arnold's convenient phrase — was "to be measured by its comprehensiveness." This concept of the Church they derived from their study of seventeenth century divines, and in advocating it they were also, like their inspirers, "latitudinarians."

Though they had no set program of belief nor policy of concerted action, they agreed upon the importance of Aristotle as the surest and safest thinker in the history of philosophy. This was their strength in so far as they influenced the intellectual atmosphere of Oxford. They had, however, obvious defects which were largely shown

in their temperaments and sympathies. The whole tone and cast of their thought was only too evidently of that tough-minded variety which lingered from the previous century largely through the influence of an earlier Oriel Aristotelian, Bishop Joseph Butler, whose *Analogy of the Christian Religion* and *Sermons* were their guides in matters of religious speculation. In an age teeming with a renascence of feeling and imagination — when Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron were giving expression and direction to the mind and spirit of the age — they were surprisingly unimaginative and unresponsive to contemporary influences. Hazlitt, aware as he was of so many streams of influence of the time, not only made no reference to the Noetics in his "Spirit of the Age" (1825) but suggested that the generally received idea of Oxford was an illusion, an unverifiable fancy, a rosy dream. "Let him, then, who is fond of indulging in a dreamlike existence," he wrote, "go to Oxford and stay there; let him study this magnificent spectacle, the same under all aspects, with its mental twilight tempering the glare of noon or mellowing the silver moonlight; let him wander in her sylvan suburbs, or linger in her cloistered halls; but let him not catch the din of scholars or teachers, or dine or sup with them or speak a word to any of the privileged inhabitants, for if he does, the spell will be broken, the poetry and the religion gone, and the palace of enchantment will melt from his embrace into thin air!"[1]

Yet the Noetics were reformers of Oxford in the sense that they infused new life into a system then only traditionally preserved. In reviving earnest study of Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Logic* they prepared the way for that discipline

[1] Hazlitt: *Pictures of Blenheim and Oxford.*

in rigorous thinking and ethical experience to which Newman and his friends subjected Oxford. For Newman himself was a child of the Noetics. In the earliest stages of his career as a scholar, his mind was detached from traditional loyalties by the rationalism into which Noetic influences tended to throw him. Aristotle's *Logic* and Butler's *Analogy* and *Sermons* were the texts upon which his thought was formed; even when it became evident to him that neither thinker was sufficient in a day wrought with profound and far-seeing changes, he still rendered them the homage of assent. He never forswore Aristotle, and his Oxford sermons, so beautifully praised by Matthew Arnold, were slight modifications of Butler's arguments adapted to new needs. Though he early renounced rationalism, his renunciation did not enable him to throw off long-established mental habits. Subsequently, long after he became a Roman priest, he revealed himself still the rationalist in his *Grammar of Assent* (1870). Indeed, for a spiritual classic, his most famous book, the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) is one of the most remarkable examples of rationalising extant.

Newman, however, started no new hares in philosophy. He was eminently an artist who was dissatisfied with half-formed ideas and could not rest until they were expressed in clear and cogent form. "You and Keble," he wrote one of his Tractarian friends, "are the philosophers, and I am the rhetorician." [2] Compared with his colleagues of the great Movement his only rival was Dr. Pusey. He was generally conceded not to be as learned as Dr. Pusey; but he was, on the other hand, more widely cultivated, had a

[2] Anne Mozley: *Life of J. H. Newman*, II, p. 156. The "friend" is R. H. Froude.

better understanding of the workings of men's minds, had more telling literary gifts, and, because of his personal and spiritual charm, has come to be regarded as Tractarianism's most interesting and attractive exponent. His personal influence, indeed, has seldom been equalled, and never surpassed, in Oxford.

His power was the more pervasive and effective because he so thoroughly understood the forces in Oxford and in England against which he vigorously set himself. These forces he identified with that Liberalism with which he had had contact while he was a very young man. In 1820, when a vacancy was made by Thomas Arnold's withdrawal, he joined the Oriel fellowship with somewhat naïve ideas, an earnest piety, and a tendency to Methodistic sentimentalism. In his *Apologia* he paid generous tribute to his Oriel friends who delivered him from his half-formed views.

Essentially a mystic thrown by force of circumstances into a society of logicians and rationalists, he learned the art of the logicians. In a very real sense, they were his first teachers; they awakened his reasoning powers and taught him how to use them with greatest effect. In their society he first read Butler's *Analogy*, "the study of which," he wrote, "has been to so many, as it was to me, an era in their religious opinions." From Butler he confessed to have received two important ideas which long remained at the root of his teaching; the first was that "the idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to a conclusion that the system which is of less importance [namely, the world of the material phenomena] is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system [or the ideal, 'noumenal' universe];

and the second, that 'probability is the guide of life.'" In these two concepts lay Newman's fusion of mysticism and rationalism; the first was a metaphysical conception not infrequently to be found in actively minded mystics; the second supplied him with a flaming sword of logic which he wielded to protect his sensitive soul in its retreat to that ghostly world of angels in which he came in the course of time most vividly to dwell.

Among the Oriel Fellows there were two whose friendship meant much to him in those days of dawning powers. The first was Dr. Hawkins, who, he said, led him "to that mode of limiting and clearing his sense in discussion and controversy, and of distinguishing between cognate ideas, and of obviating mistakes by anticipation." Dr. Hawkins also taught him "the importance of tradition as a source of religious truth." The other, the most important personal and formative influence upon him, was Richard Whately, undoubtedly the cleverest logician of his time. To Newman, Whately was a Silenus-Socrates who stood at the crossroads of his life, and in order to pass him it was necessary to fence with the most adroit of dialectic. "While I was still awkward and timid," he wrote, "Whateley took me by the hand and acted towards me the part of a gentle and encouraging instructor. He, emphatically, first opened my mind, and taught me to think and use my reason. . . ." His contact with these two scholars had serious effects upon him. Hawkins was a sacramentalist who encouraged Newman's metaphysical tendencies, disturbing his reliance upon Scriptures as the sole guide of religious truth and compelling him to concede to the traditions of the Church possibilities of which he was not until then aware. Whateley, on the other hand, with

amazing powers of judgment and common sense, stimulated his scepticism. Thus, in those interesting years, Newman found himself between two fires but the influence of the two men long remained. As a result, there appears in his sermons and historical essays a curious fusion of rationalism and mysticism which powerfully attracts mystics and rationalists alike.

For the time being, however, he found intellectual excitement in learning the subtleties of Whateley's favorite study, logic. "It was a peculiarity of Whateley's," he wrote, "to compose his books by the medium of other brains. This did not detract from the originality of what he wrote. Others did but stimulate his intellect into the activity necessary for carrying him through the drudgery of composition. He called his hearers his anvils. He expounded his views to them as he walked with them; he indoctrinated them; made them respect him." In this way Newman helped Whateley to compose his *Elements of Logic* (1826), a process in which Newman himself acquired a logical acumen and penetration which even the master himself envied.

Even while he was thus learning the arts of persuasion and logic, Newman was still the mystic seeking his "kindly light." Through his capacity for friendships and ardent discipleship to men of keen mind and spirituality, he made contacts which saved from engulfing scepticism. During the year in which he assisted Whateley in directing one of the Halls attached to Oriel, he found another teacher, not of Noetic views, in the Regius Professor of Divinity, Dr. Charles Lloyd. "This eminent man," Newman wrote in his autobiographical fragment, "was in an intellectual and academical point of view, diametrically

opposite to Dr. Whateley. . . . At that time there was a not unnatural rivalry between Christ Church and Oriel; Lloyd and Whateley were the respective representatives of the two societies; and of their antagonism. Sharp words passed between them; they spoke scornfully of each other, and stories about them and the relation in which they stood towards each other were circulated in the Common Rooms. Lloyd was a scholar, Whateley was not. Whateley had the reputation of being an original thinker, of which Lloyd was not at all ambitious. Lloyd was one of the high-and-dry school . . . while Whateley looked down on both High and Low Church, calling the two parties respectively, Sadducees and Pharisees. Lloyd professed to hold theology and laid great stress on a doctrinal standard, on authoritative and traditional teaching, and on ecclesiastical history; while Whateley called the Fathers 'certain old Divines'." . . .[3] It was Lloyd who aroused Newman's interest in the study of Church doctrine and in the history of the early Church.

Circumstances presently started a rift in Newman's relationships with his Oriel friends, beginning with an unfortunate experience with a new Provost, and leading ultimately to his final break with them. In 1826 he was appointed a tutor in the College, under the Provostship of Edward Coplestone. Newman zealously entered into the work of improving the relations between tutors and pupils which Coplestone was carrying on. When Coplestone was translated to the See of Llandaff in 1828, Newman voted for Hawkins to succeed to the headship of the College, but soon realised his mistake. Hardly had the latter been installed than he informed Newman that he would not

[3] A. Mozley: *Life of J. H. Newman*, I: 109.

countenance any attempts to introduce innovations in tutorial work. "Though it would be very unjust to say of him," wrote Newman in later years, "that he intentionally departed from the way of the College, it cannot be denied that there was something unusual and startling in his treatment of the undergraduate members who came under his jurisdiction. He began by setting himself fiercely against the Gentlemen Commoners, young men of birth, wealth, or prospects whom he considered (with real exceptions) to be the scandal and ruin of the place. Oriel, he considered, was losing its high place through them, and he behaved towards them with a haughtiness which incurred their bitter resentment."[4] Relations were, consequently, severely strained, and the two former friends now looked upon each other with suspicion, if not with open enmity.

Newman, however, was not discouraged. He formed newer friendships with younger tutors who sympathised with him. Presently there arose a division of sentiment between the tutors and the Provost of Oriel which boded serious consequences if it continued. Newman and his friends Richard Hurrell Froude and Henry Wilberforce aligned themselves against those who sympathised with the Provost. The opposition between the two factions was thus stated by Newman. He held that, according to the Laudian Statutes, a "tutor was not a mere academical policeman or constable, but a moral and religious guardian of the youths committed to him," while Hawkins believed that "Newman was sacrificing the many to the few, and governing, not by intelligible rules and their impartial application, but by a system, if it was so to be called, of

[4] A. Mozley: *Life of Newman*, I: 151.

mere personal influence and favoritism." Obviously, since the Provost was head of the college, there was little hope for Newman and his friends to hold out long against him. Presently, therefore, tension between them became so great that Newman was compelled to face the inevitable: to withdraw. He therefore retired from his tutorship, and turned his attention to his work as Vicar of St. Mary's, a living attached to Oriel, to which he had been appointed in 1828.

This episode was highly important in Oxford history. Before that time, the pulpit of St. Mary's had been served by conscientious scholars who had faithfully, but without singular inspiration, fulfilled their obligations. As a consequence, the spiritual influence of St. Mary's either in Oxford or in England was relatively negligible. Newman made it one of the most important pulpits in the world and the means of raising the spiritual life and tone of the University. He brought to his work as preacher not only the rich accumulations of his classical and theological knowledge, but the highly disciplined mind which had been trained in the Oriel School of logic. His influence was no longer confined to a mere handful of collegians in a college hall: he became the most important creative power in Oxford. His winsome personality and charm of utterance soon irresistibly drew to the services of St. Mary's many whose notions of religion had been merely conventional, and it was not long before his name was frequently on the lips of all who were enjoying the life of that cloistered community.

His experience with Hawkins caused him considerable pain but, fortunately for him, he was making new friends who were also impatient with Oriel rationalism. Hurrell

Froude now became his closest friend. Froude's militant advocacy of High Church doctrine and ritual appealed to that element in Newman's mind which Dr. Lloyd had awakened. On many walks and in the seclusion of Newman's rooms, the two indulged in earnest and even anxious discussion on the true Idea of the Church and the Church's relation to the pressing problems which were facing it. Froude, in turn, introduced Newman to John Keble, an older Fellow of Oriel, who for several years had been serving a sequestered English parish. Keble's name was in great repute in Oxford; it had been the first which Newman had heard spoken of "with reverence rather than with admiration" when he had first entered Oxford. In 1827, during a period of convalescence and spiritual depression, he found great solace in Keble's recently published *Christian Year*. "When," Newman wrote in the *Apologia*, "the general tone of religious literature was so nerveless and impotent, as it was at that time, Keble struck an original note and woke up in the heart a new music, the music of a school long unknown in England. Nor can I pretend to analyse in my own instance, the effect of religious teaching so deep, so pure, so beautiful . . . the main intellectual truths which it brought home to me were the same two which I had learned from Butler, though recast in the mind of my new master." Keble was fully informed of the trend of Oxonian rationalism, but he had profound faith in the near restoration of the Anglo-Catholic idea of the Church. He, too, like Newman, believed in the efficacy of personal influence in the shaping of thought and character of young men. When, therefore, Newman accompanied Froude and a party of congenial friends down to Keble's vicarage at Hursley, he found a new teacher

who decisively turned his mind in the direction which it finally took.

Keble had derived his Catholic ideas from his father. So completely, however, had exact knowledge of the Catholic concept of the Church been lost in England that, in order to discover it, Newman was compelled to make a fresh study of the Church Fathers. Consequently, in the Long Vacation of 1828, he began to read systematically and in chronological order the doctrinal works of the theologians of the Nicene and ante-Nicene periods, beginning with Sts. Ignatius and Justin. So competent became his knowledge of early Church doctrine that he was invited, in 1830, to contribute a volume on the history of the principal Councils of the Church. In the course of this work he became profoundly fascinated by the doctrinal disputes which led up to the Council of Nicaea. This in turn led to his writing *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), and the earlier project was abandoned.

His discussion of religious ideas and speculations of the third and fourth Christian centuries was not merely a pedestrian record of the issues and events which culminated in the formulation of the Athanasian Creed. Indirectly it was a critical comparison of modern with early theological problems. He found striking resemblances between the two eras, discovering also to his delight an edifying note which assisted further in his spiritual and intellectual growth. "The philosophy of Clement and Origen carried me away," he wrote in reminiscences, "the philosophical, not the theological doctrine. . . . Some portions of their teaching, magnificent in themselves, came like music to my inward ear, as if the response to ideas which, with little external to aid them, I had cherished so long. These

were based on the mystical or sacramental principle, and spoke of the various Economies or Dispensations of the Eternal. I understood these passages to mean that the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the manifestation to our senses of realities greater than itself. Nature was a parable; Scripture was an allegory; pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, properly understood, were but a preparation for the Gospel. . . . It is evident how much there was in all this in correspondence with the thoughts that had attracted me when I was young, and with the doctrine which I have already associated with the *Analogy* and the *Christian Year*." [5]

Newman thus found his own philosophy, derived from Butler and Keble, in the Church Fathers. *The Arians of the Fourth Century* was a slightly disguised historical treatise which in reality combatted new foes with old faces. It provided him with an opportunity to establish the main outlines of his views, a philosophy he never thereafter seriously altered but merely filled in with greater detail, piecing it out in his various literary efforts. In the course of time, his keen, alert mind finely elaborated this philosophy until it become nicely reticulated with intricate coordinate and subordinate principles, rigorously compacted by a skilful dialectic. Granted the primary assumptions, it was impossible to rend; yet it is not impossible to penetrate.

The paradox which confronts one in contemplating him is this: Newman, constantly exhorting his hearers against the wiles of liberalism and rationalism, was himself at the same time indulging in great freedom of thought and seeking ends abhorrent to the Church and to the University of which he was a member. So far as his Oxford sermons

[5] *Apologia*, p. 25.

stressed the relation of faith and reason, they echoed the thought of Bishop Butler and were wholly in tune with the Oxford mind. Yet there may be seen in them, nevertheless, an increasing note for an authority transcending either the Scriptures or human reason. This yearning for an external authority to which reason must be obedient was absent in Butler; how, then, to account for it? Habituation to the authoritative and final tone of Aristotle in secular questions probably created in his mind a craving for a similar authority in the sphere of religion. Here Butler was inadequate, for he directed reason toward nature and the Scriptures. Newman might have found his authority in Scripture but in that direction lay the possibility of Methodistic excesses of emotion and sentimentality, scorned equally by him and Butler. He also discovered that the Scriptures were not absolutely authoritative because they needed an authoritative interpreter. Once he became convinced that the Bible itself was produced by the Church, he found the answer to his problem. The Church, which had created the Bible and which had preserved it throughout the Christian centuries, became an authority greater than that of its product. The Church, then, was unquestionably the sovereign authority in religious thought.

Given the idea of the Church, his problem then was to reconcile the active play of reason with the prescriptions of an unimpeachably authoritative Church. This led, in turn, to a searching examination of the historical bases of the Church in which he was reared, and the reasons for its authority. This was the effort which most severely exercised his mind while he was an Oriel tutor and Vicar of St. Mary's. He magnified the idea of the Church in order to withstand the encroaching progress of utilitarians and

scientists. Butler's work, originally devised to check the secularising tendencies of the Deists, needed to be re-interpreted and re-applied, and this Newman did with incomparable beauty and effect. Thus he provided Oxford with a new manual for the conduct of reason in the realm of faith which continued to be ardently read, even long after the Tractarian movement officially closed, not only by his friends of the High Church School but by his avowed opponents — by the latter if for no other reason than for his agility and adroitness in logic and his delicacy of expression.

The main drift of his teaching indicated how, given "a right moral state of mind, or such dispositions and tempers as religiousness, love of holiness and truth," it was possible to harmonise reason and faith, but only after faith, under the tutelage of Church tradition and doctrine, had inwardly discerned the truth. The work of reason was to throw up breastworks of defence and to provide means of persuasion after truth was so discerned. On this problem he was engaged throughout the greater part of his life. It reached final consummation in his *Grammar of Assent*, his great work in Christian apologetics, and for readers of his school, not yet superseded. If we consider the Aristotelianised state of the Oxford mind, his metaphysics was as necessary for its conversion as his spiritual charm. Metaphysicians are not often personally winsome, but when a thinker has not only a subtle mind but fascinating personal charm and persuasive powers, he is impossible to resist; still more so, if to these are added a holy life and noble aspirations. There lay the secret of Newman's spell. Possibly his intricate dialectic was never more than a protective device; a suggestion which he seems to substantiate in his chapter

on "The Illative Sense" in *The Grammar of Assent.* Certainly, profound and remarkable as it is, it was never more than a veil of the most delicate and diaphanous texture to hide the sensitive heart of a shy recluse and mystic.

Incessant literary and parochial work sapped his strength just as he was reaching the height of his influence as preacher at St. Mary's. In the midst of excitement in Oxford and elsewhere over the first Reform Bill, he left England with Froude for a trip to the Continent where he remained for a year. In Rome he visited various shrines and was much interested in Roman Catholic activities. In 1833 he returned to Oxford, which was soon after deeply stirred by a sermon on "National Apostasy" which Keble preached, calling upon Conservatives, now that the Reform Bill had been passed and the Liberals were in power, to rally against the approaching day of disaster to the National Church. Newman immediately joined with Keble and others in plans to publish a series of tracts on various church questions. They at once began operations. Throughout the summer of 1833 they were like hornets, so ceaselessly busy were they getting tracts written, printed and distributed over the Kingdom. The new party was well controlled. It had a cohesion and discipline that were Jesuitical in precision and thoroughness. Its effect upon Oxford was such that within two years it completely changed the whole tone and character of the University.

During the early years of the Movement, it is almost impossible to distinguish Newman from the Movement to which he gave all his strength and genius. He quickly became its strategist and its soul. He employed every means in his power to insure its success, exercising his logic and his personal radiancy with such effect that had he had

less pure motives he might well be suspected of cunning and intrigue. He threw all of his powers and ingenuity against every move of his adversaries, chief of whom were some of his old Oriel friends.

His great ambition now was to break the teeth of his opponents and file their claws. He himself later characterised his attitude as "fierce." Liberals might not, perhaps, have pitted themselves against him with such animosity had he not first drawn blood in making an overt attack upon a somewhat helpless representative of their group, Renn Dickson Hampden. In 1834, Hampden, in a series of Bampton lectures on scholastic philosophy, planted profane feet on sacred Catholic ground. Poor Hampden! for the liberals there could hardly have been a more defenceless champion. "Dr. Hampden," wrote Dean Church, "was a man who, with no definite intention of innovating on the received doctrines of the Church — indeed, as his sermons showed, with a full acceptance of them — had taken a very difficult subject for a course of Bampton lectures, without at all fathoming its depth and reach. Personally, he was a man of serious but cold religion, having little sympathy with others, and consequently not able to attract any. His isolation during the whole course of his career is remarkable; he attached no one, as Whately or Arnold attached men. His mind, which was a speculative one, was not, in its own order, of the first class. . . . He had read a good deal of Aristotle, and something of the Schoolmen, which probably no one else in Oxford had done except Blanco White." [6]

Hampden's lectures might have passed without challenge had he not, in the very same year, been inspired

[6] R. W. Church: *Oxford Movement*, pp. 161–162.

by Sir William Hamilton's essays in the *Edinburgh Review* to publish a pamphlet urging the removal of religious tests for entrance to the University. This act greatly irritated the Conservative party in Oxford because it seemed to them a base betrayal of University decorum. The matter could not be permitted to pass without challenge, for it was upon the exclusively Episcopalian complexion of Oxford that the leaders of the new party put their trust in order to make the University the center of a strong High Church revival. Their chances of success would have been utterly dimmed if Hampden's proposals were seriously entertained by the authorities, for then the ecclesiastical restrictions would no longer prevent dissenters of all the perplexing varieties of evangelical religion from swamping the place. In 1835, therefore, Newman pungently replied to this tract with one of his own, but in the course of his argument he directed attention to certain doubtful and possibly heterodox assertions in Hampden's Bampton lectures. His ability as a tactician was shown in the result. He succeeded in arousing the *odium theologicum* which resulted in Hampden's being deprived of statutory powers, assigned to the Professor of Divinity, to appoint Select Preachers to the University pulpit. This episode was the beginning of a series which during the following decade turned Oxford into a battleground. "The conflicts," wrote Dean Church, "which thus for a time turned Oxford into a kind of image of what Florence was in the days of Savonorola, with its nick-names, Puseyites, and Neomaniacs, and High and Dry, counterparts to the *Piagnoni* and *Arrabiati* of the elder strife, began around a student of retired habits, interested more than was usual in Oxford in abstruse philosophy, and the last person who

might be expected to be the occasion of great dissensions in the University." [7]

From 1835 to 1840, the Movement greatly increased its power and influence over dons and undergraduates, monopolising "for the time both the intelligence and the highest religious earnestness of the University; and either in curiosity or inquiry, in approval or in condemnation, all that was deepest and most vigorous, all that was most refined, most high-toned, and most promising in Oxford was drawn to the issues which it raised. It is hardly too much to say that whenever men spoke seriously of the grounds and prospects of religion, in Oxford, or in Vacation reading-parties, in their walks and social meetings, in their studies or in common-room, the 'Tractarian' doctrines, whether assented to or laughed at, deplored or fiercely denounced, were sure to come to the front. All subjects of discussion seemed to lead up to them — art and poetry, Gothic architecture and German romance, the philosophy of language, and the novels of Walter Scott and Miss Austen, Coleridge's transcendentalism and Bishop Butler's practical wisdom, Plato's ideas and Aristotle's analysis. It was difficult to keep them out. . . ." [8]

The Movement had its greatest successes towards the close of the decade of the thirties. Each year witnessed a host of Oxonians leaving the University to take up work in churches and schools throughout the Kingdom, carrying with them impressions stamped on them by the new leaders. Each year the Movement was strengthened by the accession of undergraduates from vicarages and public schools which had been touched by Tractarian ideals. A far-reaching transformation came over Oxford itself,

[7] *Ibid.* [8] Church: *Oxford Movement*, pp. 181–182.

which made for closer bonds of unity. Rivalries of the colleges subsided as other rivalries, those of doctrine, appeared. Oxford, which twenty years before, Coplestone had defined as "a congeries of colleges," now was an integrated and collective force exercising immense formative power not only upon the thought of its members but upon the thought of England. Its isolation fast disappeared as significant and tremendous forces continued to ferment. Much of its success was the result of Newman's genius, and the Movement as a whole may be considered as his lengthened shadow. He stamped Oxford with his own image, and even those who refused him allegiance bore upon them his mark.

Yet even as Newman's influence increased and his Movement supplanted other interests, a secret transition, known then only to himself, was going on in Newman's heart. Gradually, however, as its evidences crept into his sermons and writings, they tended to turn the Movement in a direction opposite to that with which it had started. When it began it was intended to strengthen the English Church; but after 1839, when the Roman element entered, it tended to veer away towards the Church of Rome. Those who earlier preached fidelity to the teachings and traditions of the Church in which they were reared were now to be found making cautious and anxious attempts to reconcile Anglicanism and Romanism, a reconciliation which they presently found to be impossible. Newman's "via media" was an earnest attempt to demonstrate that the lion and the lamb could lie down together, but his keen intelligence soon disclosed to him that that miracle cannot happen until the lamb lies down inside of the lion.

During his readings in the controversy in the early

Church concerning the nature of Christ, usually referred to in ecclesiastic terminology as "the Monophysite controversy," Newman became suspicious of the finality of Anglican doctrine. Then, as his restless mind pursued its quarry, he became assured that his Church's teaching was too uncertain and unsatisfactory. Roman doctrine, on the other hand, he found to be more explicit. Out of this experience he wrote the famous Tract 90, which, in its recommendation of a certain type of casuistical ingenuity in interpreting the creed of the Anglican Church, suggested somewhat questionable concessions to the Church of Rome. People everywhere, including some in his own party, were astounded at his boldness. The Church, very naturally, was aroused by his implications. "It makes all the difference in the world," Whately had said, "whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place." The tragedy is that Newman, mortally caught in the coils of his own dialectic, was impelled to follow his logic to its conclusion.

That was the beginning of the end for Tractarianism. Liberals found their opportunity and recuperated, boldly and firmly meeting Newman's party. As the result of a vigorous protest by four Oxford tutors, led by Archibald Campbell Tait, then a Balliol fellow, Newman's Tract 90 was officially condemned by the Church and University, and its author censured for teaching doctrine contrary to that of the Church of England. The Tractarians made some attempts to rally after this serious check. In 1842 they attempted to elect one of their number to the Professorship of Poetry but, although feelings ran high and the resulting vote extremely close, they were again defeated. Several other set-backs made it evident that their influence

was no longer what it was; it was a dark year and it was clear that newer forces were at work which would ultimately overthrow them. Newman retired like Achilles to his tent, but unlike Achilles was still greatly interested in the course of the strife. From his religious retreat at Littlemore he kept an alert eye on his beloved Oxford, and drew to his improvised monastery many of his disciples.

With his withdrawal, leadership of the Movement changed and passed into the hands of Pusey, whose intensity and zeal so exceeded his tactical ability that in 1843 he too was censured and silenced. Tractarian zeal did not, however, abate in the face of these defeats, but continued quietly, gaining converts on all sides. Then, in 1845, the final catastrophe came when one of the most prominent of the party, William George Ward, a tutor of Balliol, was publicly condemned and deprived of his academic degrees because of the extreme Roman views which he had expressed in his book *The Ideal of a Christian Church*. The Movement then rapidly disintegrated. Within a few months, Newman privately received Catholic instructions from a priest of the Roman Church and was baptised into that Church, an action which automatically severed his connections with the University and the Anglican Church. Many of his followers immediately or shortly thereafter followed his example. Those who remained, with Pusey at their head, were so reduced in numbers that as a party power in Oxford they were relatively impotent. The tide had turned, and the liberals, whose strength had greatly increased, had their day.

Thus, after twelve years of controversial activity, Tractarianism under Newman's leadership ended as a party movement. What were its evils? Everything considered,

its leaders were too narrow in their aims. They attempted to revive the idea and spirit of medieval Oxford when the life and thought of the world had made such an object unpractical and unworthy. With too much earnestness they combatted and decried pursuits which did not readily lend themselves to the accomplishment of their objects, despising all scientific and literary studies which were not religiously edifying. Through their intrigues they made Oxford the scene of successive conflicts which distracted the thought and energies of many who might otherwise have made significant contributions to learning, and in many cases retarded the calm and harmonious development of those, more especially the young, whom they influenced. They refused to concede the principles of the Protestant Reformation but appropriated within the limits of Anglican sanction as much as they dared of the dogma and liturgy of the Roman Church, re-interpreting with interesting mental agilities and casuistries — frankly called by them "reticence," "reserve," and "economy" — the faith and formularies of the Church in which they were reared and to which by their vows they owed primal allegiance.

Yet the beneficial contributions far exceeded the evil. Though in its origins Tractarianism was primarily theological and ecclesiastical, it fused with various currents of prevalent thought and feeling, and gave them shape and impress. Though it did not play the sole part, it played an important one in the neo-Catholic revival. It was fed by several contributing streams which in the course of its development it profoundly modified. Newman himself confessed his obligations to the idealisation of the Middle Ages which he found in the poetry of the romantic move-

ment. Indirectly Coleridge contributed by inspiring a somewhat pedantic Cantabrigian, Kenelm Digby, to compile wearying and nerveless scrap-books of anecdotes celebrating Catholic chivalry and piety of medieval days. His *Broad Stone of Honour, Mores Catholici,* and *Compitium* attempted to rehabilitate imaginatively the *ethos* of medieval Roman Catholicism. Though it is doubtful that Newman himself was indebted in any way to Digby's efforts, it is less doubtful that some of the other Tractarians, notably Frederic William Faber, were stimulated by his books, and in the greater world outside of Oxford they prepared the way for a kindly reception of Tractarian doctrines. Tractarianism supplemented the imaginative and sentimental aspects of the romantic view of Catholicism with a literature addressed to the reason. In this respect, its work in England was more like that of De Maistre than Chateaubriand's in France. It resurrected Catholic dogma, contributing an intellectual element to what others had already achieved in the realm of feeling and fancy.

The leaders of the Movement introduced, in an age strongly trending towards the tough-mindedness bred by utilitarianism, a more quietistic and mystical attitude of mind, restored aesthetic elements in worship, and infused personality and sweetness of character in the religious life of the age. By making possible the exercise of imagination in religious thought and ceremonials, they brought both the Anglican Church and the Universities into connection with the dominant phase of the age, the cultivation of the sense of beauty, and the release of fine and noble emotions, under a splendid restraint. Through their poetry and prose they provided the means by which those who were temperamentally incapable of coping with the destructive

criticism of the era found the way easier to Rome. Even for those who sought no such goal, they made possible a rich and profound religious experience. In controlling the education of the English clergy they effectively touched English life in innumerable hamlets and villages no less than the great cities and manufacturing towns. Through schoolmasters also, who had come under their influence, they colored the thought and imagination of many youth in the public schools of the land.

In its social and political aspect Tractarianism opposed Chartism, Christian Socialism, and political reform of Church and State. In philosophy it neutralised to some degree the growing influence of the Utilitarians. Its greatest immediate influence for good was, of course, in Oxford. Its activities succeeded wholly in the case of some and partly in others, in removing the causes from which it arose in protest. Within the limits imposed by the Laudian Statutes, it infused all the life and meaning of which those Statutes were capable. It changed University life from one of mere routine and slavish custom to one of vitality and power. By making connections with the outside world it broke down the supine isolation which had long separated Oxford from participating actively in national life. Even its bitterest enemies admitted its beneficial effects upon the spiritual life of the place. Long after it became a matter of history, not a College was untouched by its continuing influence, and not an Oxford man wholly escaped its idealism.

## Chapter IV

## *ARNOLDISM*

"The old Tory or Conservative Party in Oxford," Newman wrote, "had in it no principle or power of development, and that from its very nature and constitution; it was otherwise with the Liberals. They represented a new idea which was but gradually learning to recognise itself, to ascertain its characteristics and external relations, and to exert an influence upon the University. The party grew, all the time that I was in Oxford, even in numbers, certainly in breadth and definiteness of doctrine, and in power." [1]

The triumph of Liberalism after Newman's capitulation to the Roman Church was highly significant in the trend of Oxonian affairs, for University Liberals, co-operating with their friends in Parliament, succeeded in their efforts to reform the Statutes, and at the same time prepared the minds of many for novel ideas. Newman, indeed, had early anticipated this consequence of his defeat. "The most oppressive thought in the whole process of my change of opinion," he said, "was the clear anticipation verified by the event, that it would issue in the triumph of Liberalism. . . . I was one of those who had kept it at bay in Oxford for so many years, and thus my retirement was its triumph. The men who had driven me from Oxford were distinctly the Liberals; it was they who had

[1] Newman: *Apologia*, p. 203.

opened the attack upon Tract 90, and it was they who would gain a second benefit, if I went on to abandon the Anglican Church." "I found no fault with the Liberals, they had beaten me in a fair field." [2]

Liberalism is a very ambiguous word, of wide application and easy to misconstrue. It is a commonplace to distinguish it primarily as an attitude of mind as against a label for a particular party with a definite creed or platform. When it is so interpreted, it tends to diverge into many diverse types difficult to harmonise or reconcile. Newman, however, had distinctly in mind a particular form of Liberalism. The Liberalism he resisted was exclusively religious, manifesting itself in the region of doctrine and religious practice. It was, in short, "the anti-dogmatic principle." "By Liberalism," he said, "I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue. . . . Liberalism is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word." [3]

This type of Liberalism was the result of the influence of the Oriel Noetics. While Newman was temporarily successful in checking it within Oxford, it became entrenched in one of the great English public schools. Ever since Dr. Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) took charge of Rugby (1828), he was communicating it to his pupils whom he sent to both Universities. "By the accession of

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 214. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

Dr. Arnold's pupils," Newman admitted, "Liberalism was invested with an elevation of character which claimed the respect even of its opponents." [4] Although many Rugbeians in Oxford were attracted and fascinated by Newman's saintliness and personality, they refused to succumb to the casuistries in which he became involved.

A new provision for the election of Scholars on a competitive system was the means by which many of Dr. Arnold's best pupils tended to colonise Balliol. Through the large number of its men who won first class honours in the "Final Schools," Balliol became so important in scholarship that, during the decades of the thirties and forties, it outstripped Oriel and became in turn "the blue-ribbon college." Rugbeians, who like their great teacher were profoundly influenced by Carlyle, found much in common with a group of unusually brilliant Scotchmen in the College, the "Snell Exhibitioners," graduates of Glasgow whom Carlyle had inspired to study German idealism. One of them, Archibald Campbell Tait, later Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced Hegel to the attention of Balliol men. Through their continual discussion of philosophical problems, the intellectual tone of Balliol was kept high and pure in an atmosphere of keen speculative inquiry. As a result, the seat of Oxonian Liberalism shifted during the Tractarian period from Oriel to Balliol.

Even more than this may be mentioned to indicate the significant place Balliol assumed. Its historian has gone so far as to assert that, during the Victorian era, Balliol forged for itself a distinctive philosophy of life. "The years 1830 to 1870," he said, "cover a momentous crisis in the history of English thought. Our insular theology and

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

metaphysics were cast into the fierce fire of Continental criticism; under this test, ideas which had been treasured as pure gold were exposed as dross and burnt away. There was urgent need for men who had the courage to face the destructive criticism and the power to inspire a like courage in others; still more, for those who were sanguine enough to hope that a creed more comprehensive, more satisfying, than the old, was still within the range of possibility. Fortunately for Balliol, she possessed such men at the time when they were most needed; and this was the secret of her success. The first lesson which they have taught has always been this: that men are greater than theories, that practice is the end of life, and that all practice must be grounded in the faith which is innate in the human mind; the second, that this faith is not bound up with the dogmas of any sect, and in no way depends upon the truth of so-called historic facts; the third, that within the limits prescribed by faith, reason is the only trustworthy guide. It is in this teaching . . . that we find the origin of a mental attitude which was at first acknowledged by friends and enemies as peculiar to Balliol, but now tends more and more to be characteristic of Oxford men at large. . . . It was something more than a jest when Jowett confessed his desire to 'inoculate the world with Balliol.'"[5]

It would, of course, be absurd to ascribe the formulation of this peculiar cast of mind exclusively to the work of Arnoldians in Balliol, but it may be suggested that they had a large part in it. Arnoldism meant something more than enthusiasm for German philosophy, theology, and methods of historical study. Primarily it went much

[5] H. W. C. Davis: *Balliol College.*

deeper, and it was the pervasive effects of this fundamental spirit which eminently touched and deepened Balliol life and thought. Arnoldism, apart from its rationalistic tendency, possessed two basic powers: a passion for institutional reform; and a faith in the moral values of life. To Dr. Arnold, the world was not banded and ribbed in fixed forms. He implanted this notion deeply in the minds of his pupils. "There is nothing," he once wrote, "so unnatural and so convulsive to society as the strain to keep things fixed, when all the world is by the very law of its motion in eternal progress; and the cause of all the evils in the world may be traced to that natural but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption, that our business is to preserve, and not to improve."[6] He reformed Rugby from top to bottom, changing it from a mere parochial affair to a place of prominence among the more influential public schools of the country. His efforts had immeasurable seismic effects upon his boys. So completely did he make both Rugby and Rugbeians his own, that the very name of Rugby meant Arnold to them. "From one end of it to the other," his biographer wrote, "whatever defects it had were his defects, whatever excellences it had were his excellences. It was not the master who was beloved or disliked because of the man. Whatever peculiarity of character was impressed on the scholars whom it sent forth was derived not from the genius of the place or in its after effects; the one image that we have before us is not Rugby, but ARNOLD."[7] And that image, Stanley also points out, was marked by earnestness, courage, and a high-minded moral view of life.

Arnold was a great schoolmaster, but he was great as a

[6] Stanley: *Life of Thomas Arnold*, I: 351. [7] *Op. cit.*, I: 351.

schoolmaster because he stirred up interest in social and political issues of the day. His own political activities on behalf of the Chartists and his efforts for the First Reform Bill were concrete and inspiring evidence of his belief put into practice. His eye constantly scanned the movement of events not only in England but throughout the world. While he was engaged in his Rugby reforms he viewed with anxiety, if not with alarm, the new spirit of Tory reaction which he discerned working to unprofitable ends in Oxford and elsewhere. That liberal spirit which manifested itself in the movement for reform and with which he was identified, was meeting a serious check as Tractarianism spread into every nook and cranny of the University and throughout England, its sweeping power not halted or impeded by his friends of the former Noetic group. They, like him, for the most part had left Oxford for other fields of work. Coplestone had become Bishop of Llandaff in Wales; Whately was Bishop of Dublin; Blanco White, erstwhile Roman Catholic, had become a Unitarian. Any one of them, had he been in Oxford, might have offered serious obstacles to Newman's Catholicising activities. Only Edward Hawkins and Renn Dickson Hampden remained. Though Hawkins had become Provost of Oriel, Arnold was well aware that some of Hawkins's pet notions, particularly those concerning the primacy of tradition, were incorporated in Tractarian doctrine. In any case, Hawkins during the early days of the growth of the Movement remained discreetly silent in spite of the fact that Dr. Arnold exchanged a set of letters with him on the serious turn affairs in Oxford were taking.

As Dr. Arnold surveyed the scene, he came to realise that the only member of the old Oriel group who had

talents sufficient to cope with Newman was Richard Whateley. But Whateley only fretted and fumed over the defection of his favorite pupil. When he saw how ineffectual his mumblings were, he resorted to scorn and ridicule, calling the Tractarians "children of the mist" and "veiled prophets." "These are the times," Dr. Arnold wrote Hampden, "when good men ought not to be silenced and let folly and malice, and dishonesty have everything their own way. It was an evil hour which took Whateley from Oxford, where he was doing great and certain good, to exhaust his powers in what is but an attempt to raise corn out of the sea-sand." [8]

Only Arnold himself appeared to be able to exert any effective counter-influence to Tractarianism, and this he did when he charged to Hampden's rescue with an article, "The Oxford Malignants" in the *Edinburgh Review*. Yet in no way did he inspire in his pupils an antagonism to Newman, though it is likely that he prepared them against Tractarian doctrines. "The only hope," he believed, "is with the young, if by any means they can be led to think for themselves, without following a party; and to love what is good and true, let them find it where they will." This was one of his fundamental tenets of Liberalism. How effective it was in those whom he influenced may be seen in the independence of mind which Rugbeians manifested, and their generosity of spirit which won commendation even from Newman. They found much in Tractarianism that was pure, high-minded, and noble: and, without yielding to its ecclesiastical seductions, they suffered it to deepen and beautify their thought and character. "These younger Liberals," wrote Dean Church,

[8] *Life of Renn Dickson Hampden.*

"were interested in the Tractarian innovators, and, in a degree, sympathised with them as a party or movement who had the courage to risk and sacrifice much for an unworldly end, and they felt that their own opportunity was come when all the parties which claimed the orthodoxy of the English Church appeared to have broken for good with one another." [9]

How far the Arnoldian tone of Balliol resulted from the apostolic zeal of Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815–1881) may be surmised from the fact that it was he who communicated his enthusiasm for Dr. Arnold to Balliol scholars like A. C. Tait, who succeeded to the Mastership of Rugby after Arnold's death; to Frederic Temple, who, in turn, succeeded Tait, both as Master of Rugby and as Archbishop of Canterbury; to William George Ward, about whom the Tractarian dispute tended to eddy after the publication of his *Ideal of a Christian Church;* and to Benjamin Jowett, who co-operated with Stanley in working for Oxford Reform. Born at Alderley Rectory in 1815, the son of an Anglican clergyman of progressive views, Stanley grew up in a household connected by marriage with two of Coleridge's most active disciples, Julius and Augustus Hare, whose influence upon the youth was prodigious. Other Liberals of the day, notably Frederic Denison Maurice and John Sterling, were also frequent guests in the Stanley home. This informal education in liberal ideas was continued in Rugby, to which he was sent in 1828, the very year when Dr. Arnold became its head. Rugby was a wonderful experience. Before long he was the center of its energetic and muscular life, the acknowledged leader of the schoolboy republic.

[9] R. W. Church: *Oxford Movement*, pp. 391–392.

In 1834, he won a Balliol Scholarship and in Oxford, then feeling the first effects of Tractarian activity, became active in winning friends for Rugby and Arnold. He was primed with liberal ideas and plans for University Reform, a subject then particularly distasteful in Oxford because of Hamilton's savage onslaughts in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. "It does not follow," Dr. Arnold wrote him, "because one admires and loves the surpassing beauty of the place and its associations, or because one forms in it the most valuable and delightful friendships that therefore one is to uphold its foolishness, and try to perpetuate its faults." [10] Stanley's response to this suggestion is evident in a letter written in 1837, when he wrote to a Cambridge friend, "One of the great objects of my ambition . . . is to set systematically and deliberately at work to effect university reformation. If it is possible, there is nothing which I would seek further." [11]

Arnold's reputation in Balliol delighted Stanley. "I don't know anything," he wrote, "that gives me more hope for the future than . . . strong praise from men who know him very imperfectly. It makes me feel, perhaps rather superstitiously, that he cannot have all these extraordinary qualities given him for nothing, and that he is, or will be, the great Elijah of the present crisis." [12] It was plain to him that the issues of the immediate future in Oxford lay between Arnold and Newman. "I dread more and more," he confessed, "a collision between Arnold and the High Church. At present he and Newman seem to be almost antagonistic powers, whereas really they are of the very same essence."

[10] Prothero: *Life of Dean Stanley*, I, p. 357.
[11] *Ibid.*, I: 190.
[12] *Ibid.*, I: 131.

Stanley distinguished himself in the Final Schools and inspired other Rugbeians, who regarded him as their leader, to emulate him. His endeavours on behalf of Liberalism resulted, however, in the frustration of his chief academic ambition — to be a Fellow of Balliol. Those who had the power of election discouraged him because they gave in "to the overwhelming terror of the outcry against Balliol as an heretical and Arnoldian College." [13]

His gentle character and sound scholarship saved him for Oxford. In 1838 he was elected a Fellow of University College; and in 1842 he was made Junior Lecturer in the same College. His success as a teacher and in improving conditions in University College marked a new epoch in its history.[14] At the same time he established his leadership of the younger Oxford Liberals, and continued his efforts for University Reform, spending several summers with his Balliol friend Tait studying administrative problems and research methods at the University of Bonn in Germany. He brought back with him to Oxford many new educational ideas which he immediately put into practice. He also collaborated with Tait in writing an important tract on University Reform, in which he urged the "safe and effectual revival of the professorial system at Oxford." It at once attracted wide attention. Its comparison of British, Scotch, and German universities appeared at a time when discussion of Oxford education was at its height and made both the Oxford public and Parliamentary reformers still further aware of the great possibilities for improvement in the Oxford scheme, without too great violence to long-established practice.

[13] *Op. cit.*, I: 191. [14] *Ibid.*, I: 353–355.

Shortly after, the crisis of Tractarianism was precipitated by Tait's protest against Tract 90. Stanley was then on the Continent. The outcry against Newman caused him to return immediately to Oxford. The wheel of fortune had swung completely around. By publishing his famous Tract, Newman faced consequences which, five years earlier, he had forced upon Hampden, his opponent. But the time had come, Stanley thought, when party animosity should be abandoned, and a policy of reasonableness adopted. He then wrote a short statement indicating his dissent from Tait and made an earnest and powerful plea for tolerance. His action was admirable evidence of the temper of the new Liberalism which he represented and won high commendation from Dean Church: "He and his friends used their influence, such as it was . . . to protect the weaker party." [15] In spite of his efforts, however, Newman was censured and disciplined. The effect of this episode was disastrous to the University. The state of the place was, to use Stanley's own words, "a waste of ecclesiastical evil, which love seemed unable to touch." [16] The outlook was especially dark both for Tractarians and Liberals. What the future had in store, no one could predict. One might then well have asked, "What of the Immanent Will, and Its designs?" The "Immanent Will" soon disclosed itself and the *impasse* was broken. The Tractarians were no longer aggressive: they were now by the change of circumstances thrown upon the defensive.

Dr. Arnold's unexpected appointment in 1841 to the Chair of Modern History was the visible sign of the change. "This," wrote Stanley's biographer, "was the one bright

[15] R. W. Church: *Oxford Movement*, p. 393.
[16] Prothero: *Life of Dean Stanley*, I: 303.

spot which the outlook at Oxford afforded him. . . . He looked forward to Dr. Arnold's lectures as the advent of a fresh, invigorating breeze across a parched and sultry plain, as the counterpoise to what he considered the evil tendencies of the Oxford Movement, as the infusion of a new life into the decaying professorial system." [17] Arnold of Rugby came up to Oxford like a triumphant Caesar, was greeted by an immense ovation, and fulfilled all of Stanley's hopes. The significance of the moment was apparent. As Carlyle might have put it, the times called for a man, and "out of the immensities and eternities" he came to clear the scene and make ready the next phase of the drama. Stanley, of course, was in high glee. "No one," he wrote, "who has not witnessed the very thin attendance upon the usual lectures of professors can fully appreciate my delight at seeing the crowds of men standing until the theatre door was opened. There was a regular rush . . . such an audience as no professor ever lectured to before, larger even than to hear the famous lectures by Hampden."

The lectures themselves marked the beginning of the Oxford school of history of which Freeman, Stubbs, Goldwin Smith, and Joseph Richard Green became the foremost exponents. The whole weight of Tractarian interest, so far as it touched the study of history, was thrown towards investigation of the history of the Church and of dogma. It was Arnold's distinction to capture the principle of historical continuity which the Tractarians had fully established as a method and apply it generally to human activities, particularly to the investigation and discussion of secular movements in the affairs of nations and of civilisation. Arnold's success saved the study of history

[17] *Op. cit.*, I: 304.

in Oxford from the futile activity of wallowing in a dead morass of legends and of miraculous interferences of a somewhat uncertain and capricious deity.

The triumph, however, was touched with tragedy which only a Hardy or an Aeschylus could depict. Arnold had time only to mark out the outlines of his new method and to suggest its course. Hardly had he given his introductory lectures and returned to Rugby than, one summer morning, June 12, 1842, he was found to have expired during the night. The episode has been made classic in literature by Stanley's account in *The Life of Dr. Arnold*, by Thomas Hughes in *Tom Brown at Rugby*, but perhaps most memorably by Matthew Arnold's *Rugby Chapel*.

After Thomas Arnold's death, "sudden, unforeseen," although all signs pointed towards Stanley to succeed him as Liberal leader, the latter was temperamentally incapable. For the following two years his attention was absorbed by his work of collecting and arranging materials for his biography of the great teacher. It was published in 1844, serving to remind Rugbeians and Liberals of the ideals and ambitions of the Master of Rugby. Then, giving much of his time to efforts for Oxford Reform, he suffered the hostility of his opponents. Thrice he was defeated for appointments to academic Chairs: in Exegesis, in Divinity, and in Modern History. In spite of these disappointments, however, he did indeed continue the Arnoldian influence — but with a difference. He lacked Arnold's qualities of leadership; he lacked the sense of antagonism to Newman; and therefore he lacked the requisite fire, the force which a more aggressive personality might have exercised to win the day. His experience, however, had revealed to him the futility of keeping up

the strife even if he had been able to do so. To a large degree, he, too, had fallen under Newman's spell, learning the great lesson of renunciation, of not trying to cut a figure in the world.

Furthermore, he was relieved of the unequal contest. The Newman problem was now engaging the attention of others and, paradoxically, the saint of Tractarianism found in Stanley one of his most helpful defenders from the virulence of academic reprisals. As circumstances tended to reveal the decidedly Roman trend of the Movement, opposition to the Tractarians became increasingly a matter for Church and University official action. Consequently, the brunt of resistance was almost completely taken from the hands of the Liberals. Now that Tractarians faced the possibilities of heresy trials, the younger Liberals, throwing all of their powers on the side of the Conservatives to save them from disaster, became themselves transformed. Characteristics of attitude and opinion made them quite unlike the Noetics from whom their Liberalism sprang. Dean Church graphically pointed out the difference. "Whereas," he wrote, "the old Liberalism had hitherto been represented in Oxford in forms which though respectable for intellectual vigor, were unattractive, sometimes repulsive," the newer Liberalism on the other hand was "much bolder, less inclined to put up with the traditional, more searching and inquisitive in its methods, more suspicious and daring in its criticism; but it was much larger in its views and sympathies, and, above all, it was imaginative, it was enthusiastic, and without much of the devotional temper, it was penetrated by a sense of the reality and seriousness of religion."

As time went on, it became clear to Stanley that Oxford

Reform could only be accomplished through Parliamentary assistance. The University itself, he was convinced, was so bound by its own routine and accumulated traditions, that it was powerless to reform itself, however zealous individuals like himself might be in working towards that end. With Benjamin Jowett, then a tutor of Balliol, he projected a volume of essays outlining ways and means by which Oxford could be made more effective. "He dreaded that the time for reform might be allowed to slip," wrote his biographer, "and that the consequence of neglecting the present opportunity would be a drastic revolution, which would sacrifice much that was of inestimable value. From this point of view, he desired generally to adapt the University to the changes which two centuries had witnessed in the relation of classes and the subjects of knowledge — to make it a national institution which should not merely train up an intellectual aristocracy, but should extend the advantages of its education to all ranks of society. And with these objects he wished to provide endowments for neglected branches of study, to attract poor students by reducing the expenses of college life, to call the University into existence as distinct from the Colleges, and especially to enlarge its foundation by strengthening and enlarging the professorial system, and by removing the limitations which confined Fellowships and Scholarships to particular families or counties." [18] When it seemed at last probable that Parliament would act, he wrote a letter to Lord John Russell, then Prime Minister, specifically petitioning for the opening of College Fellowships and for the strengthening and enlargement of the professorial system. "These objects," he said boldly, "can only be

[18] Prothero: *Life of Dean Stanley*, I: 418–419.

obtained by help from the legislature and without such help, the efforts which are now being made within the University must be in a great measure fruitless. Any hope held out from such a quarter would give great satisfaction and encouragement to those who, in our present system, are anxious for the reform of the University, with a view to its increased efficiency as a place of learning and education, and are equally anxious to see that reform effected in a temperate and considerate spirit, and by the hands of its friends."

In 1850 his appointment as Secretary of the Royal Commission necessitated his removal from the University to London, where the sittings of the Committee were held. The success of the Commission has been already mentioned. In 1855, the year following the reforms, he was appointed Professor of Ecclesiastical History. In that capacity he continued an effort he had made in 1845 when he had been Select Preacher to the University, preaching in the pulpit which Newman had made famous his sermons on *The Apostolic Age*, an exposition of that new type of Liberalism which he had been quietly developing. Now as Professor of Ecclesiastical History he gave form and body to the Arnoldian conception of the history of the early Church, probably conceived with the intention of offsetting Newman's High Church views. His appointment therefore had deep significance. Liberalism had triumphed in Oxford, where it had been so bravely withstood by Newman and his friends.

Appointment to the deanship of Westminster after his work on the Reform Commission was done removed him from Oxford except for periodic visits to deliver his lectures. His name has, consequently, been associated with

the old Abbey, whose history and antiquities came in the course of time to interest him far more than the fierce cross-fires of Victorian debate. In his later years he appears a pathetic figure, passionately devoted to his shrine but totally ineffective as a creative power upon the eager minds of willing youth. How appropriate it was, then, that his friend Matthew Arnold entitled the elegy upon him, "Westminster Abbey."

Considered against the larger background of the times and its movements, he was not a powerful figure but he had a great share in the shaping of modern Oxford. He was the continuator of Thomas Arnold's influence, the fine representative of a liberalism which made no absolute break with orthodoxy. The gentleness which characterised him was the visible manifestation of a spirit indisposed towards aggressive warfare. He had none of the subtleties of a Jowett; indeed, the work which he might have done in Oxford he left for Jowett to complete.

## Chapter V

## *THE LIBERAL AFTERMATH*

There is, perhaps, no better example of the effects wrought upon the minds of sensitive youth by the conflict of Newmanism and Arnoldism than may be seen in the case of Arthur Hugh Clough, whose pathetic vacillation, manifested in his poems and in some of his political activities, was caused by a naturally generous and receptive mind distracted by two noble causes.

Like Stanley, Clough was a Rugby prize schoolboy, a pupil of whom Dr. Arnold had high expectations. In 1836, when he was eighteen years old, he won a Balliol Scholarship and began residence in October of the following year. Newman's popularity was then at its height. An eighteen year old boy who had literally been made by Arnold could hardly enter Oxford at such a crucial time without immediately being agitated by its currents of ideas. He found many of the Rugbeians in Balliol and elsewhere no less devoted to Dr. Arnold but at the same time "nibbling at the Newman bait." How could he avoid doing likewise? "It is no harm," he wrote shortly after he was settled, "to give myself up a little to learning Oxford people, and admiring their good points which lie, I suppose, principally in what they hold in opposition to the Evangelical portion of society — the benefit and necessity of forms — the ugliness of feelings put on unnaturally

soon and consequently kept up by artificial means, ever strained, and never sober."

The vortex of Newmanism for him lay at that moment in a Fellow of Balliol, William George Ward, whose career and personal power upon him were fraught with disastrous consequences. Ward's chief interests were the intricacies of mathematics and the London ballet. It was said of him that he could play the part of Falstaff without padding, and he was frequently visited by his students while he lay outstretched on the lounge in his room for a pleasant chat about the London music-halls. He had been an ardent advocate of Benthamism and, after passing through a virulent discipleship to Whateley, was, at the time Clough first made his acquaintance, indulging in devotion to Dr. Arnold. "There was something intolerably provoking in his mixture of jauntiness and seriousness," said Dean Church, "his avowal of utter personal unworthiness and his undoubting certainty of being in the right. . . . He was not a person to hide his views, or to let others hide theirs. He lived in an atmosphere of discussion with all about him, friends or opponents, fellows and tutors in common-rooms, undergraduates after lecture or out walking. The most amusing, the most tolerant man in Oxford, he had around him perpetually some of the cleverest and brightest scholars of the place, and where he was, there was debate, cross-questioning, pushing inferences, starting alarming problems, beating out ideas, trying the stuff and metal of mental capacity." [1]

During the Tractarian era while Balliol thought was in its process of transition, Ward was to his College what Whateley had earlier been in Oriel and what Jowett was

[1] Church: *Oxford Movement*, p. 343.

later to be in Balliol: a disseminator of opinions, a Socratic gadfly. When rationalism began to pall, he renounced it and plunged into Tractarianism, using all of his remarkable dialectical powers to justify his action. Clough, to use the well-known phrase, was almost "sucked up the chimney." Later, with commendable generosity, Ward lamented Clough's intensity in entering into the theological disputes of the day, but the fact remains that he himself was largely responsible for it. "What was before all things to have been desired for him," Ward wrote, "was that during his undergraduate career he should have given himself up thoroughly to his classical and mathematical studies and kept himself from plunging prematurely into the theological controversies then so rife at Oxford. . . . Thus he would have been saved all injury to the gradual and healthy growth of his mind and character. . . . Drawn as it were peremptorily . . . into a decision upon questions the most important that can occupy the mind, the result was not surprising. After this premature forcing of Clough's mind, there came a reaction. His intellectual perplexity preyed heavily on his spirits, and grievously interfered with his studies."

The contemplation of an earnest and superior mind seeking peace amid trials and agonies has, no doubt, the deepest consolation to those who have themselves undergone a similar experience. The Victorian age has not a few records of such quests: Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and *Locksley Hall;* Mill's *Autobiography;* Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus;* Froude's *Nemesis of Faith;* F. W. Newman's *Phases of Faith;* Newman's *Apologia;* or Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis.* Clough, through his Rugby and Balliol experiences, was made to be independent in his search for

truth, and was therefore thrown, by the very condition of independence, upon a quest. He was impelled, by the insistent push of his mind, to seek some haven not foreseen, in which truth, not externally imposed by creed or dogma, would be its own reward. He refused the anchor of authority which Newman found in the Catholic Church. If his poems disclose his soul at all, do they not reveal him as "a voyager on strange seas of thought, alone"? And his state of mind that of "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised"? Did not his friend, Matthew Arnold, correctly interpret his life when he said in "Thyrsis":

*"Thou, too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound,*
*Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour;*
*Men gave thee nothing, but this happy quest,*
*If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power. . . ."*

The long mental debate into which he was thrown by his Balliol experiences crept into his efforts toward expression — but a mental debate, as Matthew Arnold once observed, can never permanently allure lovers of poetry because poetry ministers to joy, and debate to distress, to disquietude of mind and spirit. Clough's work illustrates, therefore, the tragedy of a mind unable to reach a decision. It is hardly doubtful that his poetry would have been vastly different had he in his formative years been subjected to other influences; had his undergraduate career been spent in some College other than Balliol; or had he not been so pronouncedly an Arnoldian. He was not a mystic. He was essentially the moralist; and his profoundly moral nature was inordinately, perhaps, exploited both by Rugby and by Balliol. In his doubt and

uncertainty he fell back upon this ground, a not infrequent refuge for men of his cast of mind. Yet his morality was based on an austere rationalism; it was his good fortune that it was not based upon the obscurantism which is nothing less than the shadow of a drifting cloud.

Clough, of course, was but one of those whose minds bore evidence of the determining power of Oxford during the Tractarian era. Numerous others in various fields of activity were similarly touched. Some of the more interesting will be briefly discussed in this chapter; of the rest in a survey like this, all that can be said is that

> "*. . . no one asks*
> *Who or what they have been,*
> *More than he asks what waves*
> *In the moonlit solitudes mild*
> *Of the midmost Ocean have swell'd,*
> *Foam'd for a moment, and gone.*"

Tractarianism's diverse effects may be seen in those who were members of the same family and who in one way or another responded to its influence. Newman's younger brother, Francis William, best remembered today because of his controversy with Matthew Arnold over the question of technique in translating Homer, had very little in common with his more famous brother's interests or conclusions. The line which Francis Newman's mind took may be seen at first hand in his *Phases of Faith* (1850), in which he very strikingly reminds one of Bertie Stanhope in Trollope's *Barchester Towers*. After passing through various religious vagaries, he became one of the stoutest and most insistent rationalists of his time. Of the four Wilberforces, sons of the great English emancipator and all undergraduates in Tractarian Oxford, three followed

Newman into the Church of Rome, while one of them, Samuel, later Bishop of Oxford, never developed out of that pious sentimentalism which he revealed in his memorable struggle with Huxley over the monkey question. Matthew Arnold's younger brother Thomas, father of the novelist Mrs. Humphrey Ward and prototype of Clough's radical poet Philip Hewson in the *Bothie-of-Tober-na-Vuolich*, has left for posterity an interesting record in his *Passages in a Wandering Life* of his spiritual migrations in his zigzag course from Protestantism to Catholicism, back again to Protestantism, and finally to Catholicism.

Perhaps the most interesting of separations caused by division over Tractarian questions was that of James Anthony Froude (1818–1894), and his brother, Richard Hurrell Froude, who had been instrumental in arousing Newman's High Church tendencies. The Froudes were sons of a clergyman with High Church leanings and were early trained, therefore, on lines of strictly orthodox belief, but when the younger of the two entered Oriel College in 1836, in spite of his residence in the very headquarters of the new Movement, he took an independent attitude. Newman believed that he was a willing convert, but Froude, then in the process of freeing himself from his brother's influence, was not readily responsive. Newman did, however, succeed in enlisting his interest sufficiently to begin work on a biography of St. Neot to have been included in the Tractarian project, *The Lives of the Saints*. Froude began his work with some enthusiasm but was disgusted with the inane fables which were his sources. This experience drove him still further from the Tractarian point of view. Then it was that Carlyle's voice reached

him. "Another eye, deep-piercing as Newman's and with a no less wide horizon," he wrote, "was looking across the same perplexed scene of modern life, and asking his heart what God would tell him of it. . . . Newman grew up in Oxford, in lectures, and college chapels, and school divinity; Mr. Carlyle, in the Scotch highlands, and the poetry of Goethe. I shall not acknowledge all I owe to this great man; but about three years before Newman's secession, chance threw in my way the *History of the French Revolution*. . . . For the first time it was brought home to me, that two men may be as sincere, as earnest, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions as far asunder as the poles." [2] Newman, he said, urged him to renounce his reason and accept in its place the authority of the Church, but the final break came when Newman said in a famous sermon, "Scripture says the earth is stationary, and the sun moves; and the Bible must be true." Froude therefore preferred "deepest scepticism to deepest faith" until Carlyle delivered him from the "everlasting no."

*The Nemesis of Faith*, his novel of an Oxonian undergraduate, largely autobiographical, was published in 1848. It at once aroused resentment, and not only was publicly burnt in the hall of Exeter College, Oxford, but was the immediate cause of its author's resigning his tutorship in the same College. He met Carlyle in 1849, the beginning of a friendship which lasted throughout life, and which resulted in inspiring him to turn his talents towards the writing of history. He adopted Carlyle's dramatic method in his historical works and so produced highly readable books. His writings contributed to the undermining of

[2] J. A. Froude: *Nemesis of Faith.*

Tractarian influences. In his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* he traced the rise of Protestantism in England and showed that Protestantism had secured England's greatness; and in his shorter studies, *Calvinism* (1871), *Bunyan* (1880), *Life and Letters of Erasmus* (1894), and *Letters on the Council of Trent* (1896), he defended still further the historical and philosophical basis of Protestantism. Literary historians will probably always be in debt to him for his greatest effort: that of delineating the life and character of Carlyle. His biography does not suffer when it is compared with Boswell's *Johnson*, Stanley's *Arnold*, or even Carlyle's own *John Sterling*.

Transition from Tractarianism to rationalism is clearly indicated in the *Memoirs* of Mark Pattison (1813–1885), Froude's contemporary as an Oxonian undergraduate but more profoundly influenced by the Catholic movement. "Pattison's little volume," said Lord Morley, "is not one of those romantic histories of the soul . . . by which men and women have been beguiled, enlightened, or inspired in their pilgrimage. . . . What Pattison has done is to deliver a tolerably unvarnished tale of the advance of a peculiar type of mind along a path of its own, in days of intellectual storm and stress. It stirs no depths, it gives no powerful stimulus to the desire after either knowledge or virtue — in a word, it does not belong to the literature of edification. But it is an instructive account of a curious character, and contains valuable hints for more than one important chapter in the mental history of the century." [3]

Pattison entered Oriel in 1832 and in the course of the

[3] Morley: *Miscellanies*, III: 136.

following few years fell under Newman's influence, becoming his enthusiastic devotee. High Church dogma, however, interested him less than its principle of history; like many others of his generation he found his real school of discipline in the historical researches which Tractarianism encouraged among its followers. But with him, as also with many others, the rationalistic element in Tractarianism deepened still further native tendencies in that direction. "Once born," he confessed, "it was sure to grow, and to become the master idea of the whole process of self-education on which I was from this time forward embarked." Pattison learned from Newman that Catholicism meant a view in which "all religions appear in their historical light as efforts of the human spirit to come to an understanding with that Unseen Power whose pressure it feels, but whose motives are a riddle."

After an unsuccessful effort for a Fellowship in University College, he was elected to a Yorkshire Fellowship in Lincoln College in 1838, where he worked zealously for the Tractarian cause. In 1845 he refused to follow Newman and other Tractarians into the Church of Rome but gave himself thereafter to his work of tutoring and extended his reading widely. In 1851 occurred an event which conditioned much of his later career. Through the reasonable course of things, he ought to have been elected head of his College, and his disappointment paralysed his ambitions and made him a recluse. When John Morley entered Lincoln in 1856, Pattison was invested to his young imagination "with the attraction of the literary explorer who had 'voyaged through strange seas of thought, alone,' had traversed broad continents of knowledge, had ransacked all the wisdom of printed books, and had by native

courage and resource saved himself from the engulfing waters of the great Movement." [4]

In some respects Pattison reminds one of Jowett, but the similarities do not extend far. Both had been attracted to Newmanism — Pattison, to be sure, far more so than Jowett — but their aftercourses were vastly different. Jowett had a certain assertiveness and courage which found expression in his incessant and persistent efforts for University Reform, and a social spirit which found human nature of infinite interest and fascination. Pattison, perhaps, had the more original and creative mind; it was less flexible and penetrating than Jowett's, but it moved more at ease in fields to which Jowett was a stranger. There was also a positive quality in Jowett which Pattison lacked. Where they were nearest in resemblance was in the sceptical turn of their thought, a turn produced in both cases by the nature of the experiences they underwent in the Oxford of the Liberal aftermath.

When Pattison was defeated in his hopes of becoming head of Lincoln College, he turned his attention from seeking further academic distinctions and plunged into literary researches which engaged his attention throughout the rest of his life. When he was finally elected to the post left vacant by his rival, he became a perfunctory administrator of no startling capacity for that work. During his period of isolation from society, Pattison came to believe "that the highest life is the art to live, and that both men, women, and books are essential ingredients of such a life." He found solitude to be wholly unsatisfactory; and his theory was therefore the expression of a wish. He must have suffered terribly in his self-imposed

[4] Morley: *Miscellanies*, III, p. 136.

exclusion from the society of his College and University. In the course of time, however, as the bitterness of his disappointment wore away, he gradually emerged from his Achillean sulk and mingled again with his fellows.

Few men in the University were as well versed in the history of modern culture or so well acquainted as he with the development of ideas in recent times. He thoroughly mastered the principles which underlay the evolution of the Oxford idea and system and contributed some very valuable essays on the course which that evolution ought in the future to take. "What master of arts in the University," he asked in 1855, "has not had his idea of a University expanded by the discussions concerning the state and reform of Oxford during the last few years?" One could, by making a compilation of Pattison's statements about Oxford, derive a conception of university education; not, to be sure, wholly harmonious with Newman's, but no less inspiring.

In his *Casaubon* (1875), he wrote the life of the ideal scholar, and, in some respects, his own portrait. The scholar, he said, is "greater than his books. The result of his labours is not so many thousand pages in folio but himself. . . . Learning is a peculiar compound of memory, imagination, scientific habit, accurate observation, all concentrated, through a prolonged period, on the analysis of the remains of literature. The result of this sustained mental endeavour is not a book but a man. It cannot be embodied in print, it consists in the living word. True learning does not consist in the possession of a stock of facts — the merit of a dictionary — but in the discerning spirit, a power of appreciation, *judicium* as it was called

in the sixteenth century — which is the result of the possession of a stock of facts." Such a definition of the scholar, it may be surmised, has about it the peculiar ring of the Oxford note; it emphasises literature as the "engine" of its training, but literature considered wholly as instrumental to the discipline and inculcation of noble and inspiring human traits.

Had Pattison completed all of the projects which he planned, he would have made another of that great line of Oxford historians who have traced the growth and expansion of society through the operation of ideas. His name could then be placed with Gibbon, Thomas Arnold, Symonds, and Morley. One of his projects was to write a history of learning from the Renaissance, a scheme which later shrank to less ambitious dimensions to become an intended history of the French school of philology. Even this did not come to fruition but resulted in a series of *disjuncta membra* on various aspects of his theme. Some of his fugitive essays in *The Nineteenth Century* and *The Fortnightly Review*, still uncollected, possess interest to those who care for an imaginative and yet strictly sound treatment of the interaction of ideas and social movements. His genius in this field is perhaps seen at its best in his essay *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*,[5] manifestly part of that effort of the late Victorian era to rehabilitate an adequate view of an age which Carlyle had done much to discredit. Even this essay was intended to be a prelude to a considerable work on the same subject which was abandoned when its field was shortly thereafter occupied by Sir Leslie Stephen. Consequently he has left

[5] Included in *Oxford Essays* (1855) a collection by several Members of the University.

no outstanding work; his *Life of Milton* in the English Men of Letters Series being the one book by which he is known to most contemporary readers. Morley's judgment may therefore stand as final: "To reckon Pattison among the leading minds who have stamped a deep influence on our generation, is not possible even to the friendliest partiality. . . . He started no new problem. His name is associated with no fertile speculation, and with no work of the first degree of importance. . . . Measured by any standard commensurate to his remarkable faculties, Pattison's life would be generally regarded as pale, negative, and ineffectual. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that he had a singular quality about him that made his society more interesting, more piquant, and more sapid than that of many men of a far wider importance and more commanding achievements."

Richard Congreve (1818–1899), who had been Arnoldised at Rugby, became, during the late forties, a tutor at Wadham but resigned in 1853 in order to engage in propagating the Positivist cult in England.[6] Like some other eminent Oxonians of his day, he was in Paris during the 1848 Revolution when he met Comte, and became his enthusiastic follower, bringing the Religion of Humanity back with him to Oxford and forming the nucleus of the sect there. Comte had derived from Saint-Simon two basic principles: that "political phenomena are as capable of being grouped under laws as other phenomena, and that the true destination of philosophy must be social and the true object of the thinker must be the reorganisation of the moral, religious, and political systems."[7] These principles

[6] See pages 190–191. [7] Morley: *Miscellanies*, III; 342.

completed for Congreve the projection of an arc which the elder Arnold had begun in his thought. He also had the true Arnoldian apostolic sense, which found expression in the earnestness and devotion which he thereafter exercised in winning adherents to the cause of English Positivism. So greatly did this cause engage his attention and energies that in 1853 he resigned his Wadham Fellowship and removed to London, where he worked incessantly in season and out of season to establish the cult on a firm basis. He found Oxford not sufficiently receptive to his enthusiasm, though his success there was not meagre. "Oxford," he told Symonds, "is a pleasant social place, but an enervating intellectual atmosphere." He found, no doubt, that other Oxonians could also use their minds. He was particularly aware of Jowett's antagonism to his ideas. Consequently, he paid Jowett the tribute of his scorn: "Jowett's habit of finding 'a kind of truth,' the study of dreamers like Plato, the making of verses, the pride of hot undigested philosophy, tend to mere Saturday Reviewing, want of aim, and the sleet of words which oppresses the world in the shape of magazines and ephemeral literature." His desperate effort to make a convert of Symonds illustrates his character; while the two were together in Italy, he gave Symonds, then in a period of painful depression, incessant exhortations to become openly identified with Positivism. Symonds resisted successfully his advances: "I have seen much of Congreve here. You know, of course, whom I mean — the Positivist priest in London. . . . He is divided from Littré and Mill and Lewes and others whom the world calls Comtists, by his priesthood. They take the scientific side of Comte, regarding the religious as a senile dream. He hinges his theory of the future upon the new

faith, that shall reorganise society. I never saw a man more confident of his own opinions under worse auspices."[8]

While Positivism was not distinctly an Oxford affair, Congreve exercised considerable influence over many young Oxonians whose Catholic proclivities had been awakened by the Tractarian movement but who refused to concede the authoritative claims of the Roman Church. It had a ritual, a dogma, and a priesthood which appealed to their sacerdotal appetite. By recognising the claims of science, both biological and social, it had about it the stamp of modernity which made it attract many, and, because it incorporated into its system the principles of historic continuity and of development, it satisfied the minds of those who were seeking some religion based upon them.

Congreve's most indefatigable disciple, the man who indeed became the foremost apostle of the cult in the Victorian age, was another Oxonian, Frederic Harrison (1831–1923), who had entered Wadham as a freshman in 1849 and had there first come under Congreve's tuition. After receiving his first class degree in 1853, he too, like his master, was appointed to a Fellowship and Tutorship in Wadham. In 1855, however, he resigned both and followed Congreve to London, working with him in the interests of the cult. He was admitted to the bar, and wrote voluminously and somewhat pugnaciously for various periodicals, upholding the tenets of his rationalistic creed. He soon drew attention to himself because he took issue with anyone who presumed to question the value or veracity of Positivism. During the early seventies he conducted a guerrilla warfare defending the scientific bases of Positivism; lampooned Matthew Arnold in a satiric

[8] Horatio Brown: *John Addington Symonds*, pp. 129 and 169.

dialogue frequently mentioned by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy;* wrote the accusing article in the *Westminster Review,* "The Neology of the Cloister," which resulted in Jowett's ecclesiastical trial; and, until the end of his life, played somewhat the same rôle in extending the propaganda of Positivism that Huxley did for Darwinism. The two Positivist doctrines, social humanitarianism and evolutionary meliorism, saturate everything he wrote, but his strong prepossessions and dogmatic pugnacity frequently obscured his vision and incapacitated him in making discriminations. As the ideas and issues for which he so valiantly fought tend to become assimilated into general acceptance, his ardent advocacy of them appears to have been somewhat needlessly aggressive.

To some extent Positivism colored the thought of another Victorian whose undergraduate days were spent at Oxford during the Liberal aftermath. John Morley (1838–1923) was an undergraduate in Lincoln College from 1856 to 1859, contemporary of Cotter Morison, whose *Life of Saint Bernard* was a product of Comtist influence, and of Mark Pattison. Morley himself confessed his indebtedness to the personal influence and suggestions of Comte's English representative, M. Littré, but never became an avowed disciple of Positivism. Far more creative and stimulating upon his thought and ideals was the influence of John Stuart Mill. Early in his college career, he discovered Mill's writings, which became to him, as to many others of his generation, an inspiration in the realisation of his powers and capacities. "Mill," he later wrote, "appeals not to our sense of greatness and power in a teacher, which is noble, but to our love of finding

and embracing truth for ourselves, which is still nobler." [9] "Much of Mill's most striking quality was owing to the exceptional degree in which he was alive to the constant tendency of society to lose some excellence of aim, to relapse at some point from the standard of truth and right which had been reached by long previous effort, to fall back in height of moral ideal. He was keenly sensible that it is only by persistent striving after improvement in our conceptions of duty, and improvement in the external means for realising them, that even the acquisitions of past generations are retained. He knew the intense difficulty of making life better by ever so little. Hence at once the exaltation of his own ideas of truth and right, and his eagerness to conciliate anything like virtuous social feeling, in whatever intellectual or political association he found it. Hence also the vehemence of his passion for the unfettered and unchecked development of new ideas on all subjects, of originality in moral and social points of view; because repression, whether by public opinion or in any other way, may be the means of untold waste of gifts that might have conferred on mankind unspeakable benefits. The discipline and rigour of his understanding made him the least indulgent of judges to anything like charlatanry, and effectually prevented his unwillingness to let the smallest good element be lost from degenerating into that kind of universalism which nullifies some otherwise good men." [10]

The criticism which competent judges pass upon those who have influenced them often reveals their own spiritual qualities; what they say of their teachers, may, within certain limits, reasonably be applied to themselves. If Morley's works are considered as a whole, they will be

[9] *Miscellanies*, III. [10] *Ibid.*, III, pp. 46–47.

found to reveal those ideals and qualities which he praised so highly in his teacher. His own writings disclose a fineness of spiritual perception which is very rare and which was doubtless the fruit of his discipleship to Mill, of a readiness to learn and appropriate whatever was good in the thought of those with whom in general direction of thought he radically differed. As editor of *The Fortnightly Review* during the most interesting years of the Victorian era — the fighting seventies — his efforts in securing and publishing the best of every type of thought by diverse minds illustrate Mill's cardinal principle of freedom of thought and expression. Under his wise guidance, *The Fortnightly* became the Victorian counterpart of the eighteenth century French *Encyclopedia* which he himself praised in his *Diderot.*

On the whole, Morley, whose critical and historical works may be regarded as rationalist tracts for the times, was the most admirable personality and stylist produced by Oxford in the period of the Tractarian aftermath. His total work has a remarkable unity when it is considered as separate but sustained efforts to trace the continuity and development of ideas which have moulded and given direction to modern thought. In his biographies of *Burke, Cobden,* and *Gladstone* the political and intellectual vicissitudes of British Liberalism are revealed; and in his French studies, *Condorcet, Turgot, de Maistre, Diderot, Rousseau,* and *Voltaire* the main movement of modern rationalism is traced with fine and assured line. In the Victorian era, he "did actually achieve," says one of his recent critics, "the restoration of the eighteenth century, that age of reason and humanism, to its true place." [11] In his critical

[11] Frances W. Knickerbocker: "The Making of a Liberal," *Sewanee Rev.*, Jan., 1924.

studies of English writers — Wordsworth, Emerson, Byron, Macaulay, and Carlyle — though many of his opinions were anticipated by his friend Matthew Arnold, he indicated the true line of British culture. By throwing these personalities against the background of their age, he manifested with interesting lights and shades the dominant ideas of their time. In his essays on Mill and Comte he brought his study of rationalism down to his own day. Between the two philosophers, he made a nice distinction which reveals his own preference. "Comte," he wrote, "almost sacrificed his claims to gratitude by the invention of a system that, as such, and independently of detached suggestions, is markedly retrograde. But the world has strong self-protecting qualities. It will take what is available in Comte, while forgetting that in his work which is irrational in one way as Hegel in another." [12]

Morley's own work, therefore, is an inspiring example of Liberal influences of Victorian Oxford. To Oxford he owed much though he was slow to confess it. He had a wide and deep knowledge of the secret forces which make life capable of nobilities and beauty; and, like many of his contemporaries, learned at Oxford how to sweep his eye easily over vast stretches of history, finding principles and causes at work not obvious to one without that early discipline which Oxford gave its sons. Obviously, for rationalism, considered as the antipodes of religious dogmatism, he had what practically amounted to a passion, but apart from this, he nobly followed the principle which Arnold was preaching at Oxford to "see things in and for themselves as they really are." His mind was unusually able, but he kept his gifts in severe restraint. His literary

[12] *Miscellanies*, III, p. 384.

efforts, therefore, are comparable with those of two other great Victorian men of Oxford — Newman and Matthew Arnold. Though he had neither the yearning for ecclesiastical authority of the former, nor the geniality and sprightliness of the latter, the solid soundness of his matter and his austere control of expression give him a sober distinction. Compared with him, on the other hand, neither Newman nor Arnold, it is safe to say, were so thoroughly grounded in political and social history.

Perhaps there does not exist any finer definition of Liberalism than his: "Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual is at its root. It stands for the pursuit of social good against class interest or dynastic interest. It stands for the subjection to human judgment of all claims of external authority." . . . "Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be." His work stands secure, not indeed among the masterpieces of Victorian literature — unless one excepts his *On Compromise* as belonging to that great catena of literary pleadings for unrepressed freedom and expansion of the individual in which Milton's *Areopagitica* and Mill's *On Liberty* are notable — but "in that goodly company that, in interpreting the mind of one age, speaks still to the reason and hopes of another. Its appeal is not that of the poetic imagination but that of a lesser yet a finer art, 'a language in which truth can be told.' In it we hear the voice of the seeker — a seeker for human freedom, for justice, for truth."

## Chapter VI

## *BENJAMIN JOWETT*

"I FANCY that an interesting essay might be written on the difference between the Oxford and Cambridge spirit," wrote Sir Leslie Stephen in his reminiscences. "Whatever the cause, one distinction is marked. Oxford has long been fertile in prophets; in men who cast a spell over a certain number of disciples; and not only propagate ideas, but exercise a personal sway. At Cambridge, so far as I can remember, no such leader presented himself in my time; and, moreover, Cambridge men were inclined to regard their spiritual barrenness with a certain complacency." [1]

After the reforms of 1854, Victorian Oxford was greatly influenced by three of the most eminent men of the time: by Benjamin Jowett, translator of Plato and Master of Balliol; by Matthew Arnold, who was the first thereafter to occupy the Chair of Poetry; and by John Ruskin, for whom a Chair of Art was established.

"It may be questioned," wrote Stanley's biographer, "whether Stanley would not have exercised a deeper influence had he remained in Oxford. There might have been less ground for the sad complaint he uttered not long before his death. 'This generation is lost. It is either plunged in dogmatism or agnosticism. I look forward to the generation which is to come.'" The new generation of Oxonians owed much to Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893),

[1] *National Review*, May, 1897.

who remained in Oxford after Stanley's departure and became a subtle, formative power upon their minds. He derived the Arnoldian tradition of rationalism through his contact with Stanley, and became in the eyes of his adversaries the arch-heretic of Victorian Oxford. As a result of his experiences with them he was forced into a reticence and mode of expression which was highly touched with irony and scepticism. He may not, possibly, have had an innately pyrrhonic bent, but he certainly saved himself from Tractarian engulfment only by the exercise of an incessant and unyielding questioning. Like many others of his generation, Newman's saintliness and lofty aspirations attracted him during the days of Tractarian supremacy but even at that time he could not lose faith in the power of the human mind to establish the basis of supernatural revelation. He passionately sought the truth wherever the truth might lead him. Other considerations were secondary. His own liberation and his influence upon scores of disciples is a significant chapter in the history of Victorian Oxford, for he, Atlas-like, carried it into new regions. With a highly trained mind, he extricated himself and others from the coils of dogma only by questioning all matters, human and divine. For late Victorian Oxford he became, therefore, though possibly in a less dramatic and spectacular manner, what Newman was for the earlier period.

Although he was not a Rugbeian, he was one of the most active missionaries of that type of Liberalism which Dr. Arnold exemplified. In the confused years which followed Dr. Arnold's death, he was forced to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, for his friendship with Stanley engendered views which were then dan-

gerous to hold. He was Stanley's contemporary at Balliol, having entered from Tiverton School in 1834, and was later appointed successively Fellow and Tutor in the College. Thereafter he coöperated with Tait in keeping the scholarly atmosphere of Balliol on a high plane. He began his literary career in a joint project with Stanley to complete a work which Dr. Arnold had planned but had been unable to begin, a commentary on the Pauline epistles written on rationalistic principles. In order to do it satisfactorily the two friends believed it necessary to widen their knowledge of modern Biblical criticism and to go to Germany to gain a mastery of the method of higher criticism. They departed shortly after the publication of Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*. Their differences in temperament are seen in their interests. While Stanley spent much of his time observing German towns and people, Jowett used every opportunity to meet and converse with leading philosophers and theologians, deriving in this first hand way many of their ideas and a decent notion of their method of work. A characteristic glimpse shows Jowett "on a bridge at Mainz, absorbed in Hegel's preface to the *Encyclopädie*." This introduction to Hegel was highly significant, for Jowett brought back with him an enthusiasm for Hegelian philosophy which in the course of the following three decades permeated Oxford. His exhaustive and patient readings in German theology and higher criticism of the Scriptures provided the apparatus by means of which he was delivered from the prevalent Oxonian way of viewing God and the universe.

In a true Coleridgean sense Jowett's German texts were "aids to reflection" and provided the background for the comprehensive and penetrating studies of Paulinism which

engaged him for the following nine years, resulting in his *Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans* (1855), which appeared simultaneously with Stanley's *Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians.* Both of these volumes marked an era in the religious thought of Victorian England. Jowett's in particular revealed an attitude and a penetration not then to be found in British theological literature. It consisted of a new translation supplemented with critical notes and dissertations on abstruse theological questions raised by the text.

Jowett, like Stanley, brought to his work a profound knowledge of Greek thought and of intellectual currents in Asia and Mediterranean Europe of the early Christian epoch. By bringing his competent knowledge of classical literature into close and vivid contact with the Apostle's literary style, he revealed St. Paul's intellectual and spiritual contact with Hellenistic and Hebraic civilisation, and made St. Paul's personality so interesting, revealing him as antagonist of a false and as protagonist of a true world-view, that it is difficult for us of today to understand why the book should have aroused resentment. But the dogs of orthodoxy were let loose. Reviewers began the outcry of heresy immediately upon its publication, and Jowett soon found himself the object of bitter hatred by those who sought every means, ecclesiastical and academic, to have him penalised. By secret agitation and propaganda, they succeeded in having him refused an increase of salary as Regius Professor of Greek, an office he was filling at a ridiculously low stipend; and, when the Mastership of Balliol became vacant in the same year, they also succeeded in defeating his promotion. They also managed

to keep him from securing a place on the newly reformed governing council of the University, the very creation of which was in large part due to his efforts in the cause of Oxford Reform.

Among the essays in his *Commentary* was one which caused particular annoyance to his persecutors, "On the Interpretation of Scripture." The thesis of that paper would be to us almost self-evident but it was not so to mid-Victorian readers. The Scriptures, Jowett stated, were written by men under very pressing human exigencies, and can, therefore, be properly understood only by using the same methods of interpretation that one would use in studying the *Iliad* or the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. The religious public, however, was then suffering one of its periods of great uneasiness, which was intensified by several important contributions to modern thought. In 1857, Thomas Buckle published his literary torso, *The History of Civilisation*, an exercise in historical heterodoxy, which presumed to explain the rise and development of human societies by taking account of the bombardment of four natural forces: food, climate, soil, and "the general aspect of nature." Buckle's book raised a furious storm among the orthodox, and from many pulpits in the land came strident voices warning the faithful against its insidious and sinister and subversive tendencies. But the more it was declaimed against, the more it was read; if the demolition of encrusted world-views were audible, echoes of the crashings might very well still be heard. The shock had not subsided when Darwin published his *Origin of Species* (1859). Biology offered its contribution to the destruction of ideas concerning the world derived solely from the Bible. Not only Anglicans, but those of every other

creed were outraged; for, if Darwin's implications and assertions were generally accepted, the sub-structure of Christian faith and practice, it was seriously believed, would certainly be undermined and the structure itself, therefore, utterly destroyed.

The tensity of the situation was evident to all at all capable of serious reflection. A battle began in earnest between the scientists and the Christian apologists in the summer of 1859, when the British Science Association met at Oxford. Then it was that Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce had their classic tilt over the exact degree of man's descent from the ape. Then, as if to aggravate the matter still further, Colenso, an African Bishop with a typically tough-minded Cantabrigian pugnacity, published in 1860 a theological work on scientific fallacies in Genesis with particular reference to Bishop Ussher's chronological inaccuracies. Something serious, it was evident, was happening to the House of Ussher. The Church was now thoroughly militant.

But what about the Universities? Had they no responsibility in the matter? The 1854 reforms had not, indeed, secularised them; but many of their liberals believed that the time had come to insist upon their prerogatives for freedom of thought and expression in what was to them their bounden duty, to put truth in the first place and not in the second. In 1860, therefore, a small group of Oxford and Cambridge scholars combined in the publication of a volume of essays in which they determined fearlessly to take a firm stand. That was the famous *Essays and Reviews*, in which Jowett re-published his essay, "On the Interpretation of Scripture." "The object of *Essays and Reviews*," he wrote to Stanley, "is to say what we

think freely within the limits of the Church of England. A notice will be prefixed that no one is responsible for any notions but his own. . . . We do not wish to do anything rash or irritating to the public or the University, but we are determined not to submit to this abominable system of terrorism, which prevents the statement of the plainest facts, and makes true theology or theological education impossible." The book, however, caused an inevitable sensation. Immediate efforts were made to punish its authors. Some, including Jowett, were charged with heresy, and tried before ecclesiastical courts. Jowett was publicly humiliated by being compelled to re-sign the Anglican articles of faith; he was treated, in other words, like a naughty schoolboy. He even had to face Carlyle's ugly charge: "A sentinel who deserts his post ought to be shot!" The episode made him a national figure, a Character about whom sundry legends sprang up. Young schoolboys coming up to Oxford were sure that they smelt sulphur smoke when they were in his presence; and to this day when his name is mentioned someone is sure to say, "Ah, he is the man who, in reciting the creed, would say, 'I *used to* believe.'"

This experience marked a turning-point in Jowett's career. Although he had hoped to complete other theological projects, such as a *Life of Christ* and an essay on the *Religions of the World* possibly like that of Mr. Casaubon in *Middlemarch*, he abandoned them. He showed his good sense, the situation being what it was, in refusing thereafter to publish anything further that had to do with religious questions. After 1860, his literary work consisted wholly of translations and commentaries on Greek classics, among them one on Aristotle's *Politics* which is

still used by many eminent philosophers and Hellenists. Since his earliest days as a Balliol tutor, when the only subjects seriously studied or lectured upon were those which helped undergraduates to pass final examinations, Plato had been one of his favorite sources of reading. Curiously enough, though Plato had long been honoured at Cambridge, influencing such of its poets as Spenser, Milton, and Wordsworth, the *Dialogues* had been slighted somewhat at Oxford. Certainly they were not regarded as of equal educational value with the *Logic*, *Poetics*, *Ethics*, and *Politics* of Aristotle. Indeed, someone has said that until Jowett began to lecture to small groups of interested undergraduates on such an extraneous text, Plato was "a back-stairs book" at Oxford. Those who attended Jowett's lectures were those who, then, had no immediate or practical object such as that of passing the Final Schools, which seldom asked questions on the text of Plato. For the most part, they were culturally interested in the thought of the imaginative Greek idealist. As Professor of Greek, Jowett had quietly continued these lectures all through the time of his theological controversies, but after his experience of *Essays and Reviews*, he gave himself unreservedly to them, making them the medium for the expression of his views. "He seemed to have taken the measure," wrote Walter Pater, one of his devoted auditors, "not merely of all opinions, but of all possible ones, and to have put the last refinements on literary expression. The charm of that was enhanced by a certain mystery about his own philosophic and other opinions. . . . When he lectured on Plato it was a fascinating thing to see those qualities as if in the act of creation, his lectures being informal, unwritten, and seemingly un-

premeditated, but with many a long-remembered gem of expression or delightfully novel idea, which seemed to be lying in wait whenever, at a loss for a moment in his somewhat hesitating discourse, he opened a book of loose notes. They passed very soon into other notebooks, all over the university. . . ."

His edition of Plato's *Republic*, published after his death, was worked up from these loose notes. For forty years he gave himself to the task, finding much relief from his unpleasant theological experience in contemplating and visualising the Greek conflict of ideas in the fourth century before Christ. "Plato," he wrote in 1865, "has been a great labour to me, yet I like being in such good company always. There is nothing better in style and manners, not even 'in the first circles.' I more and more wonder at the things which he said and prophesied. Hardly anything important about law or natural religion which has ever been said may not be found in Plato."

The first edition of the *Dialogues* was published in 1872 and was at once recognised as a literary effort of the first importance. The style of this first of his contributions to a fresh study of Plato was of a high order, and the work as a whole indicated how beautifully a monument of Greek genius could be rendered into English without loss of effect in beauty or idea. One could readily see that even in its conception there was a touch of art, for it was evident that Jowett made it the vehicle for expressing his views and criticism of life. So radiantly did his personality glimmer through its stately pages that one may today read it quite as much for Jowett as for Plato. Indeed, it is hard to separate them. He not only enjoyed Plato's portrait of Socrates but also Plato's "beauty

of language, dramatic power, artistic grace, and humour and irony." He delighted in Plato's dramatic method of treating abstract ideas; "the infinite variety of the lights in which he places them; the subtle way in which he leads us on the verge of proof, only to discover that we have taken the wrong path, or are face to face with some insuperable difficulty."

The significance of Jowett's Plato is that in a time when modern philosophy was undergoing profound transformations in method and point of view, Jowett restored for the ordinary person who could not read Greek a very vivid sense of a similar period in the ancient world. It also gave him opportunity to take the measure of some modern currents of opinion. He learned from Plato the tremendous and dynamic art of questioning, his studies deepened his proclivities to scepticism, and applied it to the philosophical systems of European thinkers, to Hegel, Mill, Baur, Kant, and Comte. His close contact for so many years with the Socratic habit of mind tended to develop it in himself. It is not strange, therefore, that he, so pre-eminently by his experience and intellectual background, a citizen of two worlds, the ancient and the modern, should so tellingly have criticised and taken the measure of some modern thought and tendencies. "The modern and ancient philosophical worlds," he wrote, "are not agreed in their conception of truth and falsehood; the one identifies truth almost exclusively with fact; the other with ideas." In this very sentence, apparently so devoid of any immediate application, lay the whole strength of Jowett's refusal to give unqualified assent to either the current empirical philosophy of the younger Mill or materialistic evolutionism. He called attention to the pos-

sibility that ideas are also facts. "An inner world of ideas began to be created [through Plato's artistic power], more absorbing, more overpowering, more abiding than the brightest of visible objects, which to the eye of the philosopher looking inward, seemed to pale before them, retaining only a faint and precarious existence."

Through his *Plato* he became known as one of Oxford's greatest scholars and teachers. In 1870, he was made Master of Balliol, and thereafter, for the rest of his life, he gave his attention and powers to the work of his office, improving and stabilising the College, and, not least, making it possible for all ranks and classes to enter it. Nothing concerned with the College was too insignificant for him: the buildings, library, pictures, or the work of the Chapel. He maintained the prestige of Balliol's scholarship, worked incessantly for University extension, and had the pleasure, as the years went by, of seeing his students not only colonising other Oxford colleges with tutors but also in some cases becoming their heads.

But for all this, he never allowed himself to be merely the officious administrator. Balliol became a mecca for many of the most eminent men of the time, who went there to see what Jowett might think about some of their plans and projects. Tennyson owed to him several suggestions which were worked out in poems, notably in *The Grandmother* and in *The Ancient Sage*. George Eliot and Browning, too, were among those who loved to sit in the Master's rooms and talk over things. The present Earl of Asquith and Oxford has written a tribute of deep feeling describing Jowett's far-reaching effects upon him and others who were Balliol undergraduates.

Jowett may indeed be discerned as an invisible but sig-

nificant force operating upon the minds, taste, and character of some of the more outstanding Victorian men of letters, particularly upon Clough, Matthew Arnold, Pater, Thomas Hill Green, J. A. Symonds, and Swinburne. "To have formed the mind of a single person," he once said, "is no inconsiderable result of a life." By influencing the minds of youth who greatly revered him as a teacher, he contributed an even greater gift to the culture of his times, perhaps, than anything he published. "No other tutor," wrote one of his students, the head of Merton College, "has ever approached him in the depths and extent of his pastoral supervision, if I may so call it, of young thinkers; and it may be truly said that in his pupil room, thirty, forty, and fifty years ago, were disciplined many of the minds which are now exercising a wide influence over the nation." Another of his pupils wrote: "His gifts ensured him unbounded influence with young men of ability. His marked individuality of character, which made itself felt in everything he said or did, his combination of force and character with gentleness, of many-sidedness with intensity, of great power of thought with practical ability, won enthusiastic acceptance from clever young men. His interests were almost as varied as his gifts. Here was a man who seemed to stand at the parting of many ways. Religion, philosophy, poetry, Greek literature — these were his favorite studies, but he added to them a keen interest in human nature and in practical business. There was nothing cramping in his influence over us. . . ."

Largely through Jowett's influence Hegelianism gained a foothold and security in Oxford and in Balliol from whence it was carried by eminent thinkers and worked into

English philosophical thought and literature in Victorian England. In Oxford it came into conflict with two other healthy and thriving philosophical tendencies, Mill's Utilitarianism and Comte's Positivism. However sceptical may have been Jowett's mind towards religious dogma, he had, nevertheless, a strong predilection for idealism which caused him to prefer that form of it implied in Hegel's system to the empiricism of either Mill or Comte. Therefore, when the most progressive of the younger Oxonian thinkers were turning towards the latter as safe and fruitful guides in the interpretation of life, Jowett and his pupils were impregnating Balliol, and, through Balliol, the mind of Oxford and the nation, with German idealism. As the century progressed, Oxford became the center of a " neo-Hegelian " school with which were identified some of the foremost English thinkers. This school reached its fullest development in the lectures and essays of one of Jowett's favorite pupils, Thomas Hill Green, who exhorted Oxford in the seventies to " close your Mill and open your Hegel." Bosanquet, the Cairds, and Bradley remind us of the extent to which Oxonian idealism was developed. They, following Green's example, employed uncanny dialectical gifts against empiricism and made clear the many possibilities for a contemplative career in the pursuit of ultimate truth not discordant with the findings of modern science or of happiness in the face of modern democratic movements.

Jowett's importance, then, in the history of Victorian culture lies chiefly in the fact that he stimulated many eager and brilliant creative minds to strike out into distinctive lines of political and imaginative effort. Popularly regarded as an heresiarch, an unsafe sceptic, he was

rather a modern Socrates who probed deeply into the souls of those who came within the sphere of his influence, and made them sufficiently uneasy in mind to seek more adequate bases for intellectual and spiritual peace. He made them excise from their thinking and action whatever was trivial, sentimental, or inadequate; he agitated them, on the other hand, into endless quests for beauty, eternity, God — and the service of Man. Theodore Watts-Dunton's elegy *The Last Walk from Boar's Hill: to Swinburne,* published just after Jowett's death in 1892, reflects the affection which many men of letters felt at that time:

*"Love shapes a presence out of memory's dream,*
*A living presence, Jowett golden-hearted.*
*Can he be dead? We walk through flowery ways*
*From Boar's Hill down to Oxford, fain to know*
*What nugget-gold, in drift of Time's long flow,*
*The Bodleian mine hath stored from richer days;*
*He, bright as on that morn, with sparkling gaze,*
*Hair bright as sunshine, white as moonlit snow,*
*Still talks of Plato while the scene below*
*Breaks gleaming through the veil of sunlit haze . . ."*

## Chapter VII

## *MATTHEW ARNOLD*

"There is," Matthew Arnold once said, "so much of an Oxford character to what I have written." That character may be found in the subjects and style of his poetry, in his effort to seize and express "the secret of Oxford," and in the ineffable charm of his essays. His career, like Clough's, was the logical development of powers awakened by Rugby and Oxford, but whereas Clough was hopelessly baffled by Victorian debate, Arnold, by finding "one clue to life," was delivered from uncertainty and became one of the deliverers of his age — "a soldier," to use his own phrase, "in the liberation war of humanity."

Their likenesses and divergencies were early revealed in their poetry. It was not for the sake of a mere literary device that Arnold addressed his friend as "Thyrsis" in the famous elegy. The Theocritan rivalry of gifts was something more real than that. No very exhaustive acquaintance with the poetry of either is needed to see how the same themes appealed to both. Take, for instance, the single theme of "duty," at once reminiscent of Rugby and Balliol. Compare Clough's *Higher Courage* with Arnold's *Courage;* or Clough's *Life is Struggle* and *Duty* with Arnold's *Morality* and *Self-Dependence.* A friendly rivalry is apparent in their separate interpretations. Both poets symbolised life by the metaphor of a river, but whereas Clough's has a course whose termination he does

not know, Arnold's is one which inevitably flows into "the infinite sea." Arnold, in short, had a *flair* for mysticism of a Spinozistic type which Clough lacked; a mysticism which is dominant in *The Youth of Nature*, *The Youth of Man*, *The Voice*, and *Stagirius*. Arnold, keenly aware of this difference in temperament and outlook, manifested it in *The World and the Quietist*, *To Critias*, and in the three sonnets *To a Republican Friend, 1848*, in which he plainly indicated his dissent from that passionate Republicanism which seized Clough and made him renounce Oxford and its works for the hectic turmoils of the July revolution in Paris. For Arnold, as he himself once said, was a liberal, but "a liberal tempered by experience, renouncement, and reflection." To use his own classification, while both were eminently "Hebraic" in cast of mind, his "Hebraism" was touched with "Hellenism."

Indeed, of the two Clough more greatly resembled Dr. Arnold. Properly to understand Matthew Arnold, indeed, compels recognition of the father's enormous effects upon him. Dr. Arnold established a tradition which he transmitted to his son, a tradition for high moral action and independent thinking which Matthew Arnold exemplified throughout all of his literary work. And yet it is difficult to think of two men more unlike in temperament and achievement than Matthew Arnold and his father. Dr. Arnold was above all a moralist and historian, with little of the son's grace and urbanity; he was all for immediate political action and had implicit faith in institutional reform. His son, on the other hand, came to have less confidence in such matters; he believed intensely in the remedial effects of a free play of ideas both for the harmonious development of the individual, and for the

general expansion of society. He decried hasty political action; and, though he fell under the censure of his contemporaries, called both "an elegant Jeremiah" and "a priest of the kid-glove persuasion," he persevered in an effort to permeate England with what he conceived to be the secret of Oxford: the search for perfection through devotion to sweetness and light. "I myself," he once said, "am properly a Philistine — Mr. Swinburne would add, the son of a Philistine. And although, through circumstances which will one day be known if ever the affecting history of my conversion comes to be written, I have, for the most part, broken with the ideas and tea-meetings of my own class, yet I have not, on that account, been brought much nearer to the ideas and works of the Barbarians or of the Populace." The history of that conversion remains still to be written but the materials already exist. They indicate plainly that at Oxford he experienced a broadening and a humanisation which later became the chief motive of his literary and social activities.

His conversion began when he entered the University as a Balliol scholar in 1842: that highly dramatic and significant moment when Jowett was beginning his lectures on Plato; Newman, just beginning his monastic experiment at Littlemore and occasionally preaching at St. Mary's; and Dr. Thomas Arnold inaugurating the new period of the Oxonian professoriate with his lectures on Modern History. During the three years of his undergraduate career he discovered much for himself that was winsome and lovely in Newman's character and sermons; spent a good deal of time rowing on Oxford streams and tramping over the hills which hem in the beautiful City; and although, like many other of his contemporaries later emi-

nent in English letters, he was somewhat desultory in applying himself to prescribed studies, nevertheless he ranged far and wide in the work of modern authors, discovering for himself Emerson, George Sand, Goethe, Senancour, and Beranger. He took his A.B. degree in 1844 and A.M. the following year; and was then elected an Oriel Fellow. He disappointed many of his friends by failing to win First Class Honours, yet he always remembered his Oxford days as the freest, the happiest days of his life, reflections of which may be seen in *The Scholar Gypsy* and in *Thyrsis*.

Outwardly gay and debonair, he completely surprised his friends by the tone which later he revealed in his poetry. "While he was at Oxford," wrote Max Müller, the Orientalist, "few people detected in Arnold the poet or man of remarkable genius. What was against him was his lack of seriousness. A laugh from his hearers or readers seemed to be more valued by him than their serious opposition, or their convinced assent." The same opinion is expressed in the well-known stanza written by his Balliol friend, John Campbell Shairp:

"*So full of power, yet blithe and debonair,*
*Rallying his friends with pleasant banter gay,*
*Or half-a-dream chaunting with jaunty air*
*Great words of Goethe, catch of Beranger.*
*We see the banter sparkling in his prose,*
*But knew not then the undertone that flows*
*So calmly sad, through all his stately lay.*"[1]

How is that paradox to be explained? Could it possibly be that his gaiety was a defence for a soul inherently shy

[1] Shairp: *Glenn Dessary and other Poems:* "Balliol Scholars."

and reticent? The gaiety was not, to be sure, superficial; some of his critics have ascribed it to the Celtic temperament he inherited from his mother. But he himself in many of his poems revealed the consciousness of the depth of personality, frequently referring to it as "the buried life," or the "hidden stream." His own "buried life," his deepest self, was grave; and most powerfully moved by the contemplation of human pathos and tragedy. It is impossible to ignore the deeply moving effects of the sudden and premature death of his father while he was yet a young undergraduate. His grandfather and an uncle had died from the same heart disease, and it was probable that he, too, was subject to it. His *Mycerinus* was conceived and written under the stress of this conviction; it reveals the pathetic indecision, because of a wrong moral choice when his fate was revealed to him, of a noble and generous king. Throughout Arnold's notebooks and letters there are constant references to his own awareness of the uncertainty of his life.

Was this resignation the determining note of his own life? Who can say? It is impossible to avoid his lines:

> *"Deep and broad, where none may see,*
> *Spring the foundations of the shadowy throne*
> *Where man's one Nature, queen-like, sits alone,*
> *Centred in a majestic unity,*
> *And rays her powers, like sister islands, seen*
> *Linking their coral arms under the sea."*

The idea of the suddenness of death brought inevitably to his thought the twin idea of fate: a concept which he could hardly have avoided in his contact with Greek literature, however slight attention he may have paid to it while

he was at Balliol. It certainly exercised great fascination for his tutor, Jowett, who frequently comments on it, but most notably in a passage which surveys the idea in the texts most frequently studied in mid-Victorian Oxford: "In Homer, Fate represents . . . a determination already fixed, or an ill irremedial by man, in one aspect it is the folly which 'leaves no room for repentance.' In Pindar, it receives a nobler form, 'Law, the king of all.' In the tragedians, it has a peculiar interest, giving a kind of measured and regular movement to the whole action of the play. The consciousness that man is not his own master, had deepened in the course of ages; there had grown up in the mind a sentiment of over-ruling law. It was this half-religious, half-philosophical feeling which Greek tragedy embodied; whence it derived not only dramatic irony of contrast of the real and seeming, but also its characteristic feature — repose. The same reflective tone is observable in the 'epic' historian of the Persian war: who delights to tell not (like a modern narrator) of the necessary connexion of causes and effects, but of effects without causes, due only to the will of Heaven. A sadder note is heard at intervals of the feebleness and nothingness of man. In Thucydides . . . the sadness remains, but the religious element has vanished. Man is no longer in the toils of destiny, but he is still feeble and helpless. Fortune and enterprise divide the empire of life."[2]

It is not too great a speculation to suppose that Jowett, in some of his many walks and talks with young Arnold, probably pointed out to him this evolution of the idea of Fate in the work of the great Greek writers; and the young poet, on his part, could hardly have avoided realising it

[2] Jowett: *Thessalonians*, II: 377 (ed. 1894).

afresh in the light of his own experience. Later studies did but deepen a conviction so early established, producing in him a deep quietism to which he gave expression in many poems and which colored the whole of his life. It may be seen in his *World and the Quietist*, *The Voice*, *To Fausta*, *Resignation*, *To an Independent Preacher*, *Merope*, *Sohrab and Rustum*, and *The Buried Life*, and in such passages as:

> "*. . . when I muse on what life is, I seem*
> *Rather to patience prompted . . .*
> *Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,*
> *Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high*
> *Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,*
> *Sparing us narrower margins than we deem*"

or in the well-known stanza from *Empedocles on Etna:*

> "*In vain our pent wills fret,*
> *And would the world subdue,*
> *Limits we did not set*
> *Condition all we do;*
> *Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.*"

His poetry was the revelation of his own inner life governed by the controlling idea of Necessity. It was, therefore, eminently serious, intense, and earnest, touched by a profound recognition of the moral quality of life. There is the familiar Balliol note of grappling with great questions. One is not surprised to find him writing on the occasion of the publication of his first complete edition (1867): "My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of the century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become

conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might fairly be urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn as they have had theirs."

Though the number of his poems is small compared with those of his great contemporaries, they show not only a mastery of accepted English forms of verse, but some interesting experiments, some striking innovations; as, for example, the choric measures of *Merope* and the dithyrambic effects of *The Strayed Reveller*, and *Bacchanalia*. They touch such diverse topics as society, solitude, religion, morality, progress, politics, literature. Not only does Arnold reflect his Oxford background by his classical allusions and style, but he also manifests remarkable susceptibility to contemporaneous influences and languages. Thus, while he wrote *Merope*, an imitation of a Sophoclean drama, he also wrote *Empedocles on Etna* in a form popularised by Talfourd's *Ion*, not intended for the stage but for private reading. He derived his themes from many literatures beside the ancient: notably from Italian, German, and Scandinavian. He wrote in many poetic forms: in the sonnet, lyrics of various metres and stanzas, narrative, and drama. The *Sohrab* indicates his epic manner; the *Tristram and Iseult*, the medieval poetic romance; the *St. Brandan*, the religious legend; the *Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis*, the Theocritan idyl. However diverse may have been his subjects and his styles, a philosophy of life

and a realised view of poetry as a liberating force underlies them all.

It is almost impossible now to read his poetry without reference to his view of life and of art which he gave in his critical essays, first delivered as Oxford lectures. His practice of poetry coincided partly in time with the elaboration of his critical views while he was Professor of Poetry; each interacted upon the other — the criticism grew out of his practice, and the poems conformed to his theory. One needs only to read the preface of his first publicly acknowledged volume of poems (1853) to see how conscious he was of what he was trying to do. The critical element, indeed, was never very far from his thought in his most acute creative moments; not only do we find critical allusions in his poems to the great poets who influenced him, Goethe, Heine, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Byron, Milton, Homer, and Sophocles, but we may find his eminently critical mind reflected in his definition of the function of poetry: "the criticism of life in terms of poetic truth and beauty." In his art, then, he reflects a criticism of life which many of his contemporaries misunderstood to be the "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised." It established, however, his fame as a poet who frankly met the terrible currents of Victorian doubt, and for that reason he became a solace to many who were, perhaps, far more than he, suffering the malady of disillusion and despair.

After establishing his fame as a poet of intellectual travail, he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, an office which he held for ten years, 1857 to 1867. He was, therefore, the first to hold the Chair after the reforms of 1854. Unlike his predecessors he was permitted through

the provisions of those reforms to use English in place of the traditional Latin as the language for his lectures. Unlike them again, he was permitted a greater range of freedom in his choice of subjects. He was not slow to seize his opportunity. Indeed, as we read some of his lectures, later published in various volumes, we may find many topics discussed which ordinarily do not fall within the scope of what is generally understood to be "the domain of poetry."

His appointment to the Professorship came at a time when his *Merope* made the British public raise eyebrows at a young poet who wished to write dramas in the Greek style; a drama which couldn't be acted and which no one would read. It did seem so very remote from current interests. And though he began his lectures by a stout defence of the "adequacy" of the Greek and Latin classics, and followed that with his lectures on Homer, he soon found himself discussing modern authors with a lightness of touch which drew down upon him the fire of his contemporaries. Controversy, however, provided the *milieu* in which he developed his inimitable style and effectiveness as a polemist.

One of his cardinal principles was "that the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, requires a great critical effort behind it." It was his self-appointed task to provide for England a critical effort which would raise its poetry from the barren waste of mere sentimentalities into which it was then in danger of falling because of uncritical and false followings of the great romantic poets of the early decades of the century. "In the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in our poetic art, I seemed

to myself to find the only sure footing among the Greeks." This he had said in the Preface to the 1853 volume of his poems. And yet, though he paid the Greeks the homage of imitation, he deeply believed, however, that the art of the modern poet must satisfy the demands of the modern spirit. "The main element of the modern spirit's life," he said, "is neither the senses nor the understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason. . . . The present has to make its own poetry, and not even Sophocles and his compeers, any more than Dante and Shakespeare are enough for it," [3] a comment which he elaborated in another essay: "The inevitable task for the modern poet henceforth is . . . to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis for it. . . . Dante's task was to set forth the lesson of the world from the point of view of medieval Catholicism . . . Shakespeare's task was to set forth the spectacle of the world when man's spirit re-awoke to the possession of the world at the Renaissance . . . Goethe's task was . . . not to preach a sublime sermon on a given text like Dante, not to exhibit all the kingdoms of human life and the glory of them, like Shakespeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis for it." [4] Therefore, Arnold urged, the modern poet must learn of Goethe, and attempt to work in the spirit of Goethe. That he himself was unable to attain the ideal is indicated in one of his candid and beautiful passages: ". . . For the creation of a master-work of literature, two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment. . . . That

[3] *Essays in Criticism*, 1st Series: "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment."

[4] *Celtic Literature.*

promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness; but to have desired it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity."

To him, as he indicated in his *Heine's Grave,* poetry was the voice of the Zeitgeist, forever trying to utter the cries and passions of a soul in a career of utter frustration unless girded and supported by strong inner powers. He expressed the same thought in his essay on *Heine:* there is, he said, " no better way to secure, in the end, the ear of the world; for poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance." The day in which he lived he believed was transitional; he himself a wanderer

*" between two worlds, one dead,*
*The other powerless to be born."*

To assist at the birth of this new age, was the chief of the modern poet's tasks. To it the poet must concede his private griefs and joys; he must give himself willingly to the general movement of life —

*" That general life which does not cease,"*

must bear with it, even though he may not rejoice; not to extol it, nor to condemn it, but to find its secret, its beauty, its power, and to give it lyrical utterance. Something then divinely mad seizes him and his song is touched with bacchantic fever. The poet is like a god, beholding inwardly the struggles of man and suffering the anxieties and pains of mortals. In his soul proceeds the cosmic act of gestation; an act attended with unspeakable struggle whose

agonies the poet must endure in order to assist the imminent and unceasing deliverance of the collective soul of man.

"... *Such a price*
*The Gods exact for a song*
*To become what we sing.*"

In defining the two chief aspects of poetry, Arnold reconciled what appeared at that time to be in imminent danger of being completely severed. Poetry, he said, is "the interpretress of the natural world and it is the interpretress of the moral world. It interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world, and interprets by expressing with inward conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature." He summed up these two aspects under the general terms of "natural magic" and "moral profundity." In various of his lectures he made them very clear: in *Maurice de Guerin* he gave an explanation and a criticism of "natural magic" in a poet who lacked "moral profundity"; in *Celtic Literature* he elaborated his idea of "natural magic" still further by citing examples in Celtic poetry. "This faculty of natural magic," he wrote, "has for its basis a peculiar temperament, an extraordinary delicacy of organisation and susceptibility to impressions; in exercising it, the poet is in a great degree passive . . . he aspires to be a sort of Aeolian harp, catching and rendering every rustle of Nature. To assist at the evolution of the whole life of the world is his craving, and intimately to feel it all . . . he resists being riveted by any single impression, but would be borne on forever down an enchanted stream."

He made clear what he meant by the note of "moral profundity" in his later essay, *The Study of Poetry*, where appear his famous "touchstones." His running comments upon poets and poetry which he made in that essay reveal how completely the Aristotelian concept of poetry underlay his conception and practice of the art. In interpreting "moral profundity," Arnold was re-stating what he had learned during his undergraduate career from his study of Aristotle's *Poetics*: σπουδαιότης, or "high seriousness," he actually borrowed to express his meaning.

Poetry, then, since it was the subject upon which he was supposed to lecture, occupied a good deal of his energies while he was Oxford Professor. But he discussed, as it has been suggested, many other topics. Their diversity, his frequent incidental digressions and citations from prose in which he was interested, and his apparently casual criticisms (which really are of the utmost importance in understanding his point of view) of the British mind may, indeed, distract the unwary reader; yet if one keeps his eye fixed on the central intention, it will be discovered that though Arnold ranged far and wide in search of illustrative matter he "saw one clue to life and followed it." He was pre-eminently a critic of life; to that end he made poetry, history, criticism minister.

In 1862, while he was engaged in a controversy over the new Educational Code, he became active in the disputes over *Essays and Reviews* and Bishop Colenso's *Pentateuch*. The crisis occasioned by the latter marked a change in his method of criticism. "I think," he wrote then, "it is Colenso's book which has re-animated the orthodox party against Jowett and the Essayists. I think, *apropos* of Colenso, of doing what will be an interesting thing — I

am going to write an article called 'The Bishop and the Philosopher,' contrasting Colenso and Co's jejeune and technical manner of dealing with Biblical controversy with that of Spinoza . . . with a view of showing how, the heresy on both sides being equal, Spinoza broaches his in that edifying and pious spirit by which alone the treatment of such matters can be made fruitful, while Colenso and the Essayists, from their narrowness and want of power, more than from any other cause, do not." His essay, *Spinoza and the Bible,* the intention of which he thus defined, became the first of a series of essays and lectures through which he made an effort to show how many vexing modern questions could be treated in an edifying spirit. "It is very animating to think," he wrote in 1863, "that one at last has a chance of *getting* at the English public. Such a public as it is, and such a work as one wants to do with it! Partly nature, partly time, and study have also by this time taught me thoroughly the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of *persuasion,* of *charm;* that without this all fury, energy, reasoning, power, acquirement, are thrown away, and only render their owner more miserable. Even in ridicule, one must preserve a sweetness and good-humour." [5]

This change of method was beautifully illustrated in the various selections in his *Essays in Criticism, 1st Series* (1865). If these and the other critical essays which he delivered as lectures during his professoriate — the lectures *On Translating Homer, On Celtic Literature,* and the first chapter of *Culture and Anarchy* — are read in the light of the fact that he was occupying the foremost academic

[5] *Letters:* I: 234.

Chair of literature in England, it will be seen how important was his contribution to the restoration of Oxonian prestige in the thought and life of the times. His assured air struck many of his contemporaries as an unwarrantable assumption of authority, indeed, of finality, and they were prone to see him magnifying his office. It is true that the Chair of Poetry at Oxford had previously been occupied by professors of slight critical influence, whose lectures had small importance even in Oxford. But Arnold, by the extreme good fortune of filling it at a moment when the professoriate at Oxford had been strengthened and reformed by the 1854 Act, infused new life into it and thereby expanded immeasurably the powers of its influence. Just as Newman had lifted St. Mary's from a merely local pulpit to one of commanding national importance, so Arnold raised his office to an importance it had not hitherto possessed. He had not sought to have it magnify him, but he magnified it by his own growing influence. Hence his famous disclaimer in the Preface to *Essays in Criticism, 1st Series:* "Proud as I am of my connection with the University of Oxford, I can truly say, that knowing how unpopular a task one is undertaking when one tries to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman, I have always sought to stand by myself, and to compromise others as little as possible. . . . However, it is not merely out of modesty that I prefer to stand alone, and to concentrate on myself, as a plain citizen of the republic of letters, and not as an office-bearer in a hierarchy, the whole responsibility for what I write; it is much more out of genuine devotion to the University of Oxford, for which I feel, and always

must feel, the fondest, and most reverential attachment. In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence. Who would not gladly keep clear, from all these passing clouds, an august institution which was there before they arose, and which will be there when they have blown over? . . . She will forgive me, even if I have unwittingly drawn upon her a shot or two aimed at her unworthy son; for she is generous, and the cause in which I fight is, after all, hers."

During his occupancy of the Chair, he considerably altered British notions of criticism, its character and function. Through the multiplication of literary journals which were merely party organs, political bias had tended to make criticism subserve the interest of party propaganda. Taste, vitiated by a romantic superfluity of emotion and passion, had come to mean susceptibility to powerful feelings and energetic political designs. The two foremost critics were Macaulay and Carlyle. Macaulay developed a type of criticism which may roughly be termed "synthetic," a form of critical essay hardly different from an historical treatise of the old-fashioned school, markedly partisan in objective and tone, through which the work under review served merely as *pied à terre* for an elaborate treatment of the time and times either of the author of the reviewed book, or its subject. Carlyle was radically different; he was less objective than Macaulay, and, through his impressionistic, dyspeptic, fiery, and frequently mystical rhapsodies, imposed upon his generation a subjec-

tivity which made for utter anarchy in matters of sustained thinking and deliberate judgment. Preserving the Coleridgean tradition, as Macaulay preserved the Jeffreyan, he was eruptive, circuitous, ecstatic, sententious, and imperious.

Macaulay's and Carlyle's methods in criticism were anathema to Arnold. "Flee Carlylese as you would flee the devil!" he advised a youth who sought his counsel; and, in his essay on *Heine* he deliberately took issue with Carlyle for mistaking the main current in German literature since Goethe. Whereas Carlyle had taken that current to be Tieck, Novalis, and Jean Paul Richter, Arnold pointed out his mistake and showed how much more Heine was carrying out the Goethean tradition in the "liberation war of humanity." His opinion of Macaulay was devastating. "Lord Macaulay," he said, "was a born rhetorician; a splendid rhetorician, doubtless, and beyond that an *English* rhetorician also, an *honest* rhetorician; still, beyond the apparent rhetorical truth of things he never could penetrate; for their vital truth, for what the French call *vraie vérité*, he had absolutely no organ; therefore, his reputation, brilliant as it is, is not secure. . . . As Lord Macaulay's own generation dies out, as a new generation arrives, without those ideas and tendencies of its predecessor which Lord Macaulay so deeply shared and so happily satisfied, will he give the same pleasure? . . . I think it very doubtful."

Thus he refused to play the sedulous ape to either of these two great English men of letters. He made his lectures and essays penetrate the public as genial chats about significant people whom he chose for treatment because they conveniently illustrated representative trains of thought which he believed needed, in some cases, to be

checked; in others, emphasised and aided. From his own definition of criticism — "to learn and to propagate the best that has been thought and said in the world" — that form of criticism which he evolved for himself aided partly by his studies of Saint-Beuve and Renan may be called "propagative." "Judging," he said, "is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it — but insensibly and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract law-giver — that the critic will generally do most good to his readers." In short, the distinctive character and end of a true criticism, he believed, were in its edifying power and effects; an edification, that is to say, which was eminently spiritual.

His lectures were edifying to his immediate audience. If one will remember that the University was undergoing vast transformations in thought and social character there may be seen in his essays a note addressed primarily to it. Though he wrote for England, he spoke first to Oxford, and his Oxford audience determined in large measure both their content and their form. Many middle class youths of non-conformist classes who had hitherto been excluded from Oxford were among his auditors. Himself a product of the old Oxford, he was pre-eminently a transmitter of its ideals to the new. He had noted the changes which were coming over the place through the effects of the reforms in the very year when they were instituted. He then wrote in a letter, "The place, in losing Newman

and his followers, has lost its religious movement which, after all, kept it from stagnating, and has not, so far as I can see, got anything better. However, we must hope that the coming changes, and perhaps the infusion of Dissenters' sons of that muscular hard-working, blasé middle class . . . may brace the sinews of Oxford a little."

As Professor of Poetry, then, he had a double function: to lay the basis for a sound criticism of the English national temper, and on the other hand, to rally the sentiment for "sweetness and light" in the heart of young Oxford. He feared that in the reconstruction period "contact with the best that has been thought and said in the world" might be lost in the multitude of new activities and interests which the reforms permitted. This was the controlling idea of his valedictory to Oxford in 1867, now printed as the chapter, "Sweetness and Light," of *Culture and Anarchy*. "Who will estimate," he then asked, "how much the currents of feeling created by Dr. Newman's movement, the keen desire for beauty and sweetness which it nourished, the deep aversion it manifested to the hardness and vulgarity of middle-class liberalism, the strong light it turned on the hideous and grotesque illusions of middle-class Protestantism, — who will estimate how much all these contributed to swell the tide of secret dissatisfaction which has mined the ground under self-confident liberalism of the last thirty years, and has prepared the way for its sudden collapse and supersession? It is in this manner that the sentiment of Oxford for beauty and sweetness conquers, and in this manner long may it continue to conquer."

In the light of sentences like these, how difficult it is in reading his essay on *The Literary Influence of Academies*

to escape substituting the word "Oxford" for literary academies, particularly as one sees how, in that criticism of prose style, he holds up Newman as a model. Apparently he had just been reading the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, then first published: "a production," he said *en passant*, "which we have all been reading lately, a production stamped throughout with a literary quality very rare in this country . . . *urbanity;* in this production, the work of a man never to be named by any son of Oxford without sympathy, a man who alone in Oxford of his generation, alone of many generations, conveyed in his genius that same charm, that same ineffable sentiment which this exquisite place itself conveys — I mean Dr. Newman. . . ." Newman's disclosure of Oxford's soul in his own personality and style was, *mutatis mutandis*, achieved by Matthew Arnold. How deeply Newman had inspired him in undergraduate days! "Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition," he asked, "gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music — subtle, sweet, mournful? Happy the man who in that susceptible season of youth hears such voices! They are a possession to him forever." To those who heard Arnold in the aggressive years of the sixties, his was a similar voice, equally enticing. Like Newman he projected the inner spirit and meaning of Oxford into clearness; a cry from the soul of the ancient place. To have heard Newman, to have read him, to have caught the cadence of his style and his high, poetic realisation of Oxford's uniqueness and significance, tended to unify and to give point to all of his own varied efforts. Gaily, even

after he relinquished his Chair, with a touch growing more and more secure and confident, he made his various social, political, and religious essays, to outline and project his interpretation of the Idea of Oxford. To him Oxford was the embodiment in matchless buildings and lovely gardens of a spirit, a sentiment: "Beautiful city! . . . who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to perfection?"

Culture, the word most constantly on his lips, was synonymous with the search for perfection, and he himself was among that goodly company whom he described as "the great men of culture." "The great men of culture," he said, "are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside of the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light." By making culture prevail in a time when a crude materialism was gaining the ascendency, he continued Newman's effort to bring Oxford's peculiar spiritual power to play upon modern civilisation.

## Chapter VIII

## *JOHN RUSKIN*

Three years after Arnold's retirement from the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, John Ruskin was elected first Professor of Art. If Arnold represented the classic tradition in the University, Ruskin was *par excellence* the champion of the romantic.

Visible evidences of Oxford's eternal, invisible conflict are apparent in its architecture; on all sides the casual observer may see the clash of styles and tastes; here a Palladian and there a Gothic structure. The major note of Ruskin's career, even before his return to Oxford as a teacher, may be seen in his titanic effort to restore both in England and in Oxford the dominancy of the Gothic over the Palladian. "Nowhere in England," wrote his biographer, "had the Gothic lingered so late as in Oxford; nowhere, it may have seemed to him, was it so important that the Gothic should be revived." [1]

Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1842–1860) and *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) transformed English taste in art. In these and his other works Ruskin revealed himself a son of Victorian Oxford by making essays on such abstruse and technical matters as painting and architecture serve as vehicles for the communication of spiritual and moral ideas. The second volume of *Modern Painters*

[1] E. T. Cook: *Life of Ruskin*, I: 144.

(1846), containing his analysis of the "laws" of perceiving beauty and of expressing it in art, created a profound sensation. Three years later its principles were amplified and extended to architecture in *The Seven Lamps,* which, Frederic Harrison said, "shook conventional ideas to the root and flung forth a body of new and pregnant ideas."[2] His place in the development of the Victorian mind is now generally recognised. "Ruskin," said J. M. Brydon, Vice President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, "first probably awakened the English people to a knowledge of what art really meant; art in the life of its people, art in the true sense of the word, as an ennobling faculty which raised men, and induced in them a longing for higher and nobler things. Probably in that connection no work had more influence and deserved higher commendation, not only to students of architecture, but to all who were striving for culture, than that magnificent book, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture. . . .*"[3]

In Oxford particularly the effects of *Modern Painters* and *The Seven Lamps* may be seen in the revival on a wide scale of interest in art and the theory of beauty which they preached. The second volume of *Modern Painters* appeared at a crucial moment, in the year following Newman's conversion to the Church of Rome. Enthusiasm for Gothic art which Tractarianism had fostered seemed destined to be weakened by the loss to the University of so many of the most influential members of the Movement. Ruskin's aesthetic philosophy and espousal of the cause of natural science stimulated thought and discussion which immedi-

[2] Frederic Harrison: *John Ruskin,* pp. 57–59.
[3] Cited in Cook: *Life of Ruskin,* I: 237.

ately assumed the prominence in Oxonian circles of that formerly held by Tractarian questions. *The Seven Lamps* became an evangel, a *vade mecum* used by Ruskin's friends and disciples as a manual of propaganda in the Gothic cause. An interesting glimpse of William Morris as an undergraduate reveals him passionately reciting in his sonorous voice to a rapt circle of his friends favourite chapters; and one of the first productions of the Kelmscott Press was a reprint of that entitled, "On the Nature of Gothic" which to Morris, said Professor Mackail, became a "gospel and a fixed creed."

One of the first evidences of Ruskin's influence on Oxford was manifested in 1847 when one of his closest friends, Professor Henry Acland, drew up a memorandum signed by himself and many other science teachers in Oxford, urging "the erection of an edifice within the precincts of the University for the better display of materials illustrative of the facts and laws of the natural world, . . . a general insight into which was ennobling; and he referred effectively to the second volume of *Modern Painters* which was then creating a profound sensation at Oxford."[4] In the year of the reforms, the signers of the petition succeeded in their effort. In the meantime *The Seven Lamps* had appeared. No doubt it had great influence in causing the choice for the proposed Natural History Museum of a Gothic in preference to a Palladian design. Ruskin himself, appropriately enough, was appointed to superintend the work of erecting the building; and, in turn, persuaded two of his friends then relatively obscure, Rossetti and Millais, to assist him in the interior decoration, an incident which may be taken as convenient

[4] E. T. Cook: *Life of Ruskin*, I: 443.

in dating the beginning of aestheticism in Oxford. Rossetti through his capacity for influencing young and susceptible minds became an unofficial don exercising great effects upon the ideals and activities of many undergraduates with whom he had personal contact. Three years later he was commissioned to erect what is now the library of the Oxford Union and engaged several of those who later became eminent in English art to help him, including Burne-Jones and Morris, whose faded daubs are now treasured curiosities for all sightseers at Oxford.

Ruskin, Rossetti's patron and the prime inspirer of aestheticism, was a child of Tractarian Oxford. Had it been more rigorously disciplined than it was when he entered Christ Church as a Gentleman Commoner in 1837, it is doubtful if he would have developed as he did. His activities and interests are amazing. He was an enthusiastic mineralogist, geologist, draftsman, musician, engaged in the study of architecture and now and then busying himself writing poetry and essays in which he fervently endeavoured to convey some sense of the beauty of nature. Wordsworth was then his interpreter of life, leading him forth into open fields beside melancholy streams and up precipitous mountains. "At Oxford," said his biographer, "his study of the classics was unwilling, and little given to the niceties." His Latin was "the worst in the University"; he found Terence "dull and stupid," Tacitus hard, and Lucretius he detested with "a wholesome detestation." He could never construe a line of Homer, while Sophocles, he thought, was "dismal and in subject disgusting." "Probably the best discipline which he owed the University," continued Sir Edward Cook, "was a knowledge of every syllable of Thucydides. The 'in-

tricate strength,' the scorn of construction with which he knotted his meaning into a rhythmic strength that writhed and wrought in every way at once interested him intensely in Thucydides as a writer." "On the whole," he himself testified, "I am conscious of no result from the University . . . except for the dead waste of three or four months writing poems for the Newdigate." [5]

In 1840, he was compelled to leave Oxford for a short period because of illness, returning, however, the following year to complete his course. He received a fourth-class degree in 1842. Shortly after, he published the first volume of *Modern Painters,* signed by "a graduate of Oxford." Its style was nervous but vivid, pitched in a mellifluous key and marked by poetic sensitiveness to colour. It was instantly recognised on all sides as a work of genius. Even the sceptical and cautious Jowett read it "with the greatest delight; the minute observation and power of description it shows are truly remarkable. Since I read it, I fancy I have a keener perception of the symmetry of natural scenery."

The first volume of *Modern Painters* was an amorphous effort, obviously incomplete. In the interval which elapsed before the publication of the second volume, Ruskin diligently studied the work of some early Italian painters, particularly of Tintoretto, in which he found exemplification of the florid style which his own romantic tendencies established as a standard of taste. He evolved his philosophy of art by co-ordinating ideas of aesthetic which he derived from various poets and philosophers of the German and English romantic movement. The work of Turner and his Italian models served excellently as illustrations, though

[5] Cook: *Life of Ruskin,* I: 80.

he intended the philosophy to interpret them. As a consequence he created a manual for the production and appreciation of painting which liberated not only himself but his wide circle of readers from the classical aesthetic of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of Edmund Burke, and of Alison, removing the discussion of art and of taste from the objective to the subjective plane and bringing it more into harmony with the prevalent poetic and aesthetic tendency of the age. The Oxford touch is seen in his Aristotelian categories which, because of their air of finality and authority, seemed to present an impeccable code and criterion in the field of aesthetic psychology and metaphysics.

Ruskin was engaged in his researches and speculations concerning nature, art, and aesthetic taste for the following seventeen years, amplifying his initial suggestions in the succeeding volumes of *Modern Painters*, which appeared between 1845 and 1860. Though he completed his original intention by applying his elaborate theories to specific artists and works of modern art and revealing the intimate connection of true art and aesthetic with sound morals and religion, he had in the meantime undergone a profound expansion of mind. Some indications of this development may, it is true, be seen in the last three volumes of *Modern Painters*, but generally speaking what was noticeably absent in the first two volumes of this series was the social note which in the course of time dominated his thought and his literary work.

His experience in Paris in 1848 was as crucial to him as that revolutionary episode was to Clough, Congreve, and some other Oxonians whose liberal tendencies had been moved by that spectacle. Evidences of its effect were first revealed in his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849),

which faintly sounded the new social note of sympathy with workingmen's aspirations; the crescendo was reached in *A Joy Forever* and *Unto This Last* (1862), *Munera Pulveris* (1862–1863), *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), and *Time and Tide by Wear and Tyne* (1868).

During this momentous crisis of Ruskin's inner life, Carlyle became his guide and stay. Ruskin had a remarkable capacity for discipleship and manifested it in his firm loyalty to the author of *Past and Present*. He consequently became Carlyle's chief expositor and apostle, re-interpreting Carlyle in his own manner and adding his special gospel of the need of art to beautify life. The Hebraic or hortatory note is very prominent in the social essays which then engaged him. The Carlylean note may be heard in his own interpretation and evaluation of his work. "In these books of mine, their distinctive character, as essays on art, is their bringing everything to a root in human passion or human hope. . . . Every principle of painting which I have stated is traced to some vital or spiritual fact: and in my works on architecture, the preference accorded finally to one school over another, is founded on a comparison of their influences on the life of the workman—a question by all other writers on the subject of architecture wholly forgotten or despised."[6]

The pugnacious and apologetic tone of much of Ruskin's later work was probably caused by his resentment of the impatience manifested by critics for his attempt to connect social problems with the moral and aesthetic drift of his first essays. During the decade of the sixties they raised an outcry against his venturing into fields for which

[6] *Modern Painters:* Vol. V, pt. ix, ch. I, sec. 7.

he was, they thought, eminently unfitted either by his temperament or his experience. They insisted that he remain in the field of his first success and abstain from touching the vexing questions of economics and sociology. But he steadfastly refused to heed their injunctions. He had the sense of a work to do and was resolute, with the fire and insistence of a Hebraic prophet, to carry out that which the Lord had given him to do. His stubborn persistence in disregarding the cautions his critics offered, stands in strong contrast to Matthew Arnold's readiness, in a spirit of "sweet reasonableness," to profit by criticism. Both men, inspired by a sense of giving direction to the newer aspirations of the time, in different ways became guides to many who had faith in them.

One of the significant effects of his influence in Oxford was a movement to establish a Chair of Art which came to fruition in 1868, when Mr. Felix Slade bequeathed thirty-five thousand pounds sterling for the endowment of such a Chair. Appropriately enough, Ruskin was appointed to fill it. His professorship was divided into two periods: the first from 1870 to 1877, and the second from 1882 to 1885. Like Matthew Arnold, he did not limit his lectures to the field for which the Chair was specifically established but made them the means by which he carried his new social and economic gospel to Oxford. "He went to Oxford," said his biographer, "to preach the necessity that . . . 'the gracious laws of beauty and labour should be recognised by the upper, no less than the lower, classes of England.' . . . It was his business to claim for Art its full place among the Humanities; and where, more properly than from an Oxford Chair, could his protest have been made, on the one side against the commercial

Philistinism of the outer world, and on the other against the over-specialisation of merely intellectual studies which sometimes dominates the lecture-rooms of a University? "[7]

While his most significant work was done during his first tenure of the Chair, he solidified and extended it in his second, which was terminated by his failing health. In the earlier period he periodically published various letters on social and economic questions of the day which were later collected in *Fors Clavigera* (1871–1878). In these letters he repeated his social criticism of the age he had already made in *Time and Tide*. In some respects, his biographer said, *Fors Clavigera* was a continuation of Carlyle's *Past and Present*, having two main purposes: to supply a running criticism on passing events and current ideas, and to provide an essay in social reconstruction. In resuming his attacks on Mill and the Utilitarian philosophy already begun in *Time and Tide*, he tended to check their growing influence. And, in order to offset what he conceived to be the idle and sterile tendencies of aestheticism then manifesting themselves in Oxford, he gave practical evidence of his social ideas by establishing the Guild of Saint George, a community of workers for the restoration of arts and handicrafts in England. Another of his activities during the same period, one of the most classic of his Oxford experiments, was the building of the Oxford road, in which he was assisted by undergraduates including Oscar Wilde.

Perhaps from the point of view of Victorian Oxford's effort to realise a coherent and attainable theory of life, Ruskin's most significant contribution was his expansion of that concept of culture, the roots of which had already

[7] E. T. Cook: *Life of Ruskin*, II: 179.

been nourished by Newman and Arnold. To Newman, "culture" was indissoluble from a religious attitude of the spirit; to Arnold, "culture" was essentially a literary and rational affair, concerned primarily "with the best that has been thought and said in the world." Ruskin's concept was more like that of Newman than like Arnold's. Newman was a lover of all the arts, whereas Arnold indicated his apathy towards arts other than the literary in the limitation of his formula; consequently, in his definition of culture, there is relatively slight recognition of the cultural values in the study and appreciation of painting, sculpture, architecture, or music. Arnold's idea of beauty was an inner condition of mind suggested in his phrase "sweetness and light," rather than in any cultivated capacity for sensuous experience. The Tractarian movement, however, to which Ruskin owed much, had awakened in him a passion for beauty in painting and architecture; and the romantic poets, to whose excessive sensuousness Arnold was considerably hostile, developed in Ruskin a delight in landscapes, sky, wind, rain, and sun. What Ruskin did, therefore, was to amplify and give body to Tractarian and romantic desires for natural beauty and to make the pursuit of art a religious occupation.

The fundamental note of his teaching was that art had an ethical basis. Late in life he said that he derived this concept from his reading of Aristotle's *Ethics*, a work with which he had been but superficially acquainted during his undergraduate career, but which had, in the course of his researches and reflections, become for him one of his best loved. The Aristotelian note, quite apart from his Aristotelian method in *Modern Painters*, runs throughout all his essays. From Aristotle he derived the Greek con-

cept that a healthy and vigorous social life could exist only on the basis of the necessary discipline of the individual suggested in *The Ethics*. But, since modern society in the face of present-day social, economic, and industrial forces was so unlike that of Periclean Athens, it was necessary for him to re-interpret the Aristotelian theory in the light of Christian doctrine. In doing this he made a synthesis wholly in keeping with the ecclesiastical atmosphere and traditions of Oxford which Newman had revived. There is, indeed, a note reminiscent of Newman in his definition of the prime end of art, which, he said, is to teach and to praise; that "it is evident that the sensation of beauty is not sensual on the one hand, nor . . . intellectual on the other, but is dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart, both for its truth and its intensity." [8] Briefly stated, the purpose of art, as he defined it, was for religion's sake.

Because of this Oxonian element in Ruskin's work, his books and lectures and personality powerfully infected the Oxford of the seventies and eighties, an infection so subtle and pervasive that it has, making allowance for later developments, persisted to our own day in coloring the thought and writing of Oxford men. "The part that Ruskin played in the general education of the University," wrote Dean Kitchen, "by means of lectures and personal influence was . . . considerable. There are some professors who, admirable though their research work may be, might yet be living in the moon for any vital influence which they may exercise upon the studies or students of the University. . . . Delightful as Ruskin's Oxford lectures are still to read, yet . . . no one can appreciate their

[8] *Modern Painters:* Vol. II, pt. ii, sec. 1, par. 2.

effect, unless he was so fortunate as to hear them. One saw the same strange *efflatus* coming and going on in his eye, his gestures, his voice."[9] "Many members of the University," wrote another of his listeners, "date from that period their first awakening to a sense of the beauty of Italian art."[10]

Viewed against the background of the effort to expand the possibilities of the Oxford system by the strengthening of the professoriate, Ruskin as Professor of Art, no less than Arnold as Professor of Poetry and Jowett as Professor of Greek, graciously fulfilled the expectations of those who had for so long worked to have the efforts of collegiate tutors supplemented. To the personal supervision of undergraduates by college tutors, themselves scholars of unquestionable attainments, was now added the creative inspiration of professors who, themselves intimately in touch with modern life, shaped their teaching to meet the fierce intellectual strife of their age. The dual action of the two systems, now harmoniously operating, made Oxford ideal as a collective formative power upon the Victorian mind.

[9] G. W. Kitchen: *Ruskin at Oxford*, p. 40.

[10] H. L. Thompson: *Memoir of Dean Liddell*, p. 211. Both citations are quoted by Cook in *The Life of Ruskin*, II, p. 173.

## Chapter IX

# *AFTERGLOW*

### *Apostles of Art and Beauty*

"This man John Ruskin arose," wrote William Morris when he was an undergraduate at Exeter, "seeming to us like a Luther of the arts."[1] Most closely after Ruskin, Morris represents the fusion of two new phases of humanism which characterised Oxford tendencies during the mid-century, the urge towards social improvement and the recognition of the aesthetic values of life. Like Ruskin he was a man of multitudinous activities entering intensely and vigorously into the life of the times, making practical demonstration of his social theories in concrete projects. He attempted through the Arts and Crafts movement to stir a renascence of beauty in the industrial order of his day. But he went much further than Ruskin did in his proposals to solve industrial problems. He was a radical not only in his art theories but also in politics; and was an outspoken Socialist.

He entered Oxford in 1854, coming up from Marlborough School, which had been deeply touched by Tractarianism, with aspirations towards the priesthood which disappeared as he came into contact with the newer forces at work in reformed Oxford. As in Ruskin's case, though he gained little from the formal instruction of the lecture-

[1] Morris: *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, June, 1856.

room, he imbibed deeply of the *genius loci*. His mind was unusually receptive and responsive. Already saturated with Tennysonianism, he was soon inducted into a small company of congenial friends with similar tastes and interests who gathered for discussion in Pembroke College. He formed a friendship with Edward Burne-Jones which lasted throughout life, and from Burne-Jones he derived much information concerning the principles and objects of life which left a lasting effect upon him. His High Church tendencies were sustained by a prolonged course of reading in ecclesiastical literature which awakened his interest in liturgical forms, in exciting days of Church history, and in the golden age of the thirteenth century. In the process he developed a professional eye for the beauties of architecture which was further stimulated and deepened by his first contact with Ruskin's works.

Ruskin indeed, as he confessed, became to him the flaming crusader of a new social impulse; Ruskin could see more deeply into those glorious days of the future when the medieval crafts and guilds system would re-establish a satisfactory social order. Carlyle's *Past and Present* gave some hints of this regeneration; but Ruskin, with his marvellous beauty of imagination and profound social faith, had incomparably adumbrated it in his *Joy Forever*. Ruskin, therefore, sustained the priestly instinct which stamped Morris's contributions to Victorian culture; he energised an impulse to awaken in the lower classes recognition of the fact that joy of life comes from joy in work. What matters it if the disciple read his own joyous and energetic temperament into the mind of his teacher? In appropriating the Ruskinian evangel, Morris politely ignored the conscientious moral limitations of

Ruskin's message; and made art to be the medium of a wholesomely social and joyous activity. He caught at the idea of making art the motivating power of work; this was for him, as for so many others, a profound and inspiring suggestion for the rehabilitation of a civilisation cruelly impoverished by those who had severed the two. How appropriate it was, therefore, that one of the first productions of his Kelmscott Press was an edition of Ruskin's chapter, "On the Nature of Gothic" which was to Morris a "gospel and a fixed creed."

While Morris was at Oxford his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages found expression in a project to establish a monastery which, in its conception, would not have been greatly unlike that which Newman established at Littlemore. The scheme did not materialise at that time, but later, in a more workable form, it may have found expression in the firm of Morris and Company for the manufacture, according to the Ruskinian faith, of beautiful works of art. His founding of the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in 1857, to serve as a University organ for Pre-Raphaelitism, served to extend the new gospel of art. Morris's personal friendship and frequent contact with Rossetti during the latter's sojourn in Oxford also had deep effects upon his art and practice of poetry, decisively turning his attention from the priesthood towards secular activities. This was a single instance showing how Rossetti assisted the development of the nascent philosophy, aestheticism.

The two poets of his own day with whose poetry his had most in common were, of course, his two friends Rossetti and Swinburne. Like them, he continued with the special turn of his own genius, that romantic tradition

which Arnold vainly endeavoured to check. His themes, heroism, chivalry, erotic passion, and the praise of beauty, also engaged the art of his two friends, but he lacked Rossetti's warm southern glow and Swinburne's defiant paganism. If his poetry be compared with that of other Oxford poets of his time, one notes the absence of mental uncertainty which makes Clough's poems so painful, and the sad melancholy which makes Arnold's so tragically poignant. Morris, however, unlike them, did not possess the critical mind. He had, rather, much of Browning's robustness and vigour but without Browning's subtlety. His narrative poems and lyrics are touched with a serene and charming simplicity.

Like Rossetti, Morris was a lover of pure Beauty, but of sensuous perhaps more than of contemplative. His marvellous sensitiveness to color, sounds, and atmosphere is exemplified in his poetry, which bears striking evidences of his devoted study of Homer, Chaucer, Keats, and Shelley. Except possibly in his *Sigurd the Volsung* (1870) there is little or no hint of the exalted social hopes which form the dominant theme of his prose.

In the course of his career, as he put Ruskin's art creed into practice, his idea of beauty suffered a sea change. Like Ruskin's it was conditioned by a purpose. Ruskin made art to subserve the interests of religion and morality; Morris made it an object to be pursued for Socialism's sake. The mutation was due in some measure to his undergraduate readings in Kingsley, Carlyle, and Maurice. It found expression in his *Dream of John Ball* and in *Hopes and Fears for Art*. He also stated it in a lecture which he gave, significantly enough, in that Oxford college which had expelled Shelley.

The title of the lecture was *Art Under a Plutocracy;* and the date, November 14, 1883. Ruskin was in the Chair and introduced him. Among his auditors was Oscar Wilde, whose *Soul of Man Under Socialism* may have had its original inspiration on that occasion. The question which Morris then put to Oxford was this: "How does it fare with our external surroundings these days? What kind of an account shall we be able to give to those who come after us of our dealings with the earth, which our forefathers handed down to us still beautiful, in spite of all the thousands of years of strife and carelessness and selfishness? Surely this is no light question to ask ourselves; nor am I afraid that you will think it a mere rhetorical flourish if I say that it is a question that may well seem a solemn one when it is asked here in Oxford, amidst sights and memories which we older men at least regard with nothing short of love." Like Ruskin, he grieved at the debasement which had befallen Oxford by "the fury of the striving shop and the progressive college." "When I remember," he said, "the contrast between the Oxford of today and the Oxford which I first saw thirty years ago, I wonder I can face the misery (there is no other word for it) of visiting it."

He distinguished between aristocratic and democratic concepts of art. Intellectualised art, he pointed out, ministers to mental needs, but a decorative art, "though so much of it as is art does also appeal to the mind, is always but a part of things which are intended primarily for the service of the body." Art which is exclusively intellectual is recreative in motivation in order to give exquisite pleasure to the artist. Because it presupposes wealth, leisure, and the desire to give free expression to creative activity, it is

essentially aristocratic, esteemed principally because it is a thing of beauty apart from practical considerations. Such an evaluation dissevered the artistic impulse from the primal necessity of a meaningful and satisfying artistic activity. Democratic art, on the other hand, is the purely social art, not selfish and purely individualistic like aristocratic art. Its practical usefulness demonstrates its power and value.

In making this distinction between the two forms of artistic activity, however, it was not his purpose to praise one at the expense of the other. The separation had been caused by sophistication of an industrialised society with the result that for those who lacked wealth and leisure, "the inborn instinct for beauty is checked and thwarted." Conscious effort was now imperative, he insisted, for re-uniting the two types. Hence, he conceived it to be his duty on this occasion to "foster discontent with that anarchy and its visible result; for indeed, I think it would be an insult to you to suppose that you are contented with the state of things as they are; contented to see all beauty vanish from our beautiful city; contented with the squalor of the black country, with the hideousness of London, with the wen of all wens, as Cobbett called it; contented, lastly, to be living amid unutterable and sickening misery of which a few details are once again reaching us as if from some unhappy country which we could scarcely expect to bear, but which I tell you is the necessary foundation on which our society, our anarchy, rests. . . ." "Art is long and life is short; let us at least do something before we die. We seek perfection; but can find no perfect means to bring it about; let it be enough if we can unite with those whose aims are right and their means honest and feasible. Help

us now, you whom fortune of your birth has helped to make wise and refined; and you can help us in our workaday business towards the success of the cause, instill into us your superior wisdom, your superior refinement, and you in your turn may be helped by the courage and hope of those who are not so completely wise and refined."

This, then, was Morris's radical exhortation to Oxford. The civilisation which produced such monstrosities as London and Manchester would pass — *must* pass as society passed into a new phase when art would be made the expression of joyous activity by a people aroused collectively to a new passion and ardour for beauty. "I am," he solemnly affirmed, "one of the people called Socialists. I am certain that evolution in the economical conditions of life will go on, whatever shadowy barriers may be drawn by men whose apparent self-interest binds them, consciously or unconsciously, to the present, and who are, therefore, hopeless for the future." Competition, the principle of the present industrial order, he urged, must be done away; co-operation, the condition of the Middle Ages, must be restored.

Viewed with respect to the movement of which he was an integral exponent, Morris was the product of two forces which contended with each other in Oxford after the reforms: that of the impulse for social helpfulness, and that of the passion for beauty. What might have happened to his genius had he had personal contact with Jowett, it is difficult to surmise. Would he have become another Arnold Toynbee? Morris, however, escaped the engulfing rationalism of the "Robert Elsmeres."

The difference between him and his friend Swinburne lay largely in that escape. Swinburne was not only one of

Jowett's favorite pupils but was an instrument upon which Jowett fondly played. Jowett delivered him from a Shelleyan passion for an abstract idea of liberty by introducing him to Mazzini, who, in turn, inspired him to direct his passion towards a specific object and cause: the Italian *risorgimento*. Through Jowett's teaching also he was delivered from early ecclesiastical vagaries of the Tractarian aftermath and prompted to sing the glory of religious freedom. Swinburne himself generously paid tribute to his beloved teacher: "Because the work of Jowett's life was mainly, if not entirely, devoted to Oxford, it does not follow . . . that apart from Oxford he was not, and that his only claim to remembrance and reverence is the fact that he put new blood into the veins of an old university. . . . If he had never put pen to paper he would have left his mark upon the minds and memories of younger men as certainly and as durably as he did. For my part, I always think of him, by instinct and by preference, as he was wont to show himself in the open air during the course of a long walk and a long talk, intermittent and informal and discursive and irregular to the last and most desirable degree." [2]

Swinburne left Oxford after three years' residence without taking a degree. All signs point there, however, as the place where his creative powers were given their final turn and where, indeed, he conceived and in part executed some of the poems which first brought him fame. His boyhood and Oxford career were as romantic as Shelley's. In spite of the fact that he belonged to the patrician class, in the eventful year of 1848 he contributed several schoolboy poems of a strong revolutionary and Chartist tone to

[2] Swinburne: *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, p. 26.

*Fraser's Magazine;* by the time that he entered Eton (1832) he was a confirmed democrat and ardent devotee of Shelley. Shelley set generous impulses singing in his soul. At Eton he discovered Victor Hugo, the second of his masters. Hugo, indeed, became for him "the spiritual sovereign of the nineteenth century" — "the greatest man since Shakespeare." The only fault in his Shelleyolatry was that he did not select Shelley's own college, University. Perhaps it was just as well, however, for his security, that he selected Balliol, whose highly rationalistic and liberal tone was highly congenial to him and provided the proper kind of an atmosphere for a confirmed rebel like him.

He began residence in 1856. Like Morris, he owed much to the circles in which he moved. Among his friends was John Nichol, who introduced him to the Old Mortality Society, which Nichol had founded in 1856. Among the members were Thomas Hill Green, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, and James Bryce. Swinburne became active and enthusiastic in this group, whose distinctly political and liberal tone was unmistakably Balliol, distinguishing it from "The Brotherhood," a society devoted to art, then flourishing in Exeter College, to which Morris belonged. The literary organ of the Old Mortality was the *Undergraduate Papers,* to which Swinburne frequently contributed. These ephemeral undergraduate magazines, no less than the more ambitious annual volumes of essays published by dons between 1855 and 1860, were evidences of the surging new life which was then remaking the University and did much to mould opinion and to give tone to Oxonian creative effort.

Swinburne attended Matthew Arnold's lectures but

listened with some disdain to prophecies of the approaching collapse of the romantic tradition in English poetry. Consciously or unconsciously, he was inwardly making the great choice of a tradition in which to work. He could hardly, therefore, avoid deeply feeling the diversity of views expressed by Arnold and by Rossetti. Under which king, Bezonian? may have been his great question in those crucial days.

Personal contacts, however, cast the die. He did not actually meet Arnold until long after his undergraduate days, but he did form lasting friendships at Oxford with Ruskin, Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones, whose influence on him was immense. Among them Rossetti was first. "There can be," said Mr. Gosse, "no question . . . that D. G. Rossetti exercised over him a more restraining and yet stimulating influence than any one else." [3] If Arnold believed that romanticism had run its course, Swinburne's enormous vogue plainly showed that he was mistaken. Arnold himself strengthened the romantic tendency by arousing resistant or recuperative forces, and was unable to understand its persistence. In a letter written during the sixties he described Swinburne as a "sort of pseudo-Shelley"; and on the publication of *Atalanta in Calydon*, which succeeded in the very field in which his own *Merope* had so dismally failed, he wrote to an Oxford friend: "Swinburne's poem is as you say; the moderns will only have the antique on the condition of making it more *beautiful* (according to their own notions of beauty) than the antique; *i.e.*, something wholly different." Whether, as Swinburne's genius developed, Arnold was annoyed by the modern's disregard for restraint and frequent inco-

[3] *Life of Swinburne*, p. 69.

herency of structure, it is, of course, impossible to discover; but it is obvious that Swinburne clearly manifested the absurdity of Arnold's anticipations concerning the probable collapse of romanticism.

Swinburne's great achievement was a fusion of Rossetti's influence with Arnold's. And yet he was always pre-eminently the romanticist; when he touched classical themes he treated them in a romantic manner. His undergraduate verses showed obvious traces of the influence of Rossetti and Morris; his published work thereafter revealed evidences of devotion to the Elizabethans. Even when it was dramatic in form, it revealed far more poetic fluency than dramatic power. His greatest successes were in the lyric form, for which his genius was peculiarly fitted. In *Poems and Ballads* (1866), his new lyricism conveyed many echoes of his Oxford background. It also suggested ideas which shocked and aroused his readers. "Mr. Swinburne charged impetuously," wrote an *Edinburgh* Reviewer, "waving his banner of revolt against a conventional reticence, kicking over screens and rending drapery — a reckless votary of Astarte, chanting the 'Laus Veneris' and the worship of Dolores, Our Lady of Pain. From the calm and bright aspect of Paganism, he was turning toward its darker side, to the mystic rites and symbolism which cloaked the fierce primitive impulses of the natural man." [4]

Freedom and Beauty were Swinburne's goddesses. These he persistently worshipped with all the ardours of a passionate soul. To them he offered oblations of all human and divine love, infinite pity, "the lilies of chastity," "the roses of passion," the dread of death, in

[4] *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1906, p. 472.

tumultuous and seducing rhythms, and " revels of rhyme." He gave lyric utterance to many vague and inchoate aspirations which were calling for articulation by many young men at Oxford whose thirst for beauty and melody had been deeply stirred by the aesthetic movement there. What wonder, then, that he became their *choragus?*

To think of him, however, merely as the poet of hedonism is to ignore what place hedonism as an ethical method or criterion held in his view of life. It is a strange anomaly that Swinburne, who is ordinarily regarded as a high priest of paganism, took severely to task his Balliol contemporary, J. A. Symonds, for preaching the cult of what Swinburne himself called " Whitmania." " The cult of the calamus, as expounded by John Addington Symonds to his fellow-calamites," he wrote, " would have found no acceptance or tolerance with the translator of Plato." [5] His own paganism had relatively little, if any, relationship to Whitman's. It had its roots in intimate contact with Hellenic civilisation, cross-fertilised by modern French and Italian literatures. His contempt for historic Christianity was hinted in many of his poems, particularly in his *Hymn to Proserpine, A Litany, A Hymn to Man,* and *Hertha.* If he warred on theology and churches, it was because he believed, like Shelley, that theology and ecclesiasticism, with their priestly hierarchies and dull dogmatism, were one in effect with kingdoms and principalities which limited and thwarted the fullest and most spontaneous and most joyous human development. There was the mark Jowett left on him: it was stated in his famous lines:

[5] *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* p. 34.

*"A creed is a rod,*
*And a crown is of night;*
*But this thing is God,*
*To be Man with thy might,*
*To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit; and live out thy life*
*As the Light."*

Undoubtedly Swinburne was the most brilliant poet of his age and exercised great creative power upon Oxonians of the last four decades. His influence may be seen in the work of Oscar Wilde, Arthur Gray Butler, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson.

Oxonian aesthetic was further developed through the influence of two other pupils of Jowett: John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater, who tended, as their minds developed, to fix the *ideology* or theoretic aspect of the philosophy of beauty shorn of some of its Ruskinian elements. Their work was chiefly done in reflective and critical prose, which incidentally served as medium for their separate philosophies. They provided an historical and theoretical basis for that drift towards a wider conception of culture which Newman, Arnold, and Ruskin had inspired. Their essays, wrought with consummate art and almost painful attention to stylistic effect, contributed a new "aid to reflection" to youth who sought a career of joyous experience. It is true that their influence differed according to their individual temperaments and genius — Symonds becoming the historian of the Renaissance while Pater became its interpreter — yet the total effect of their work bears a striking resemblance.

Both had been profoundly shaped by Ruskin in their

more impressionable years, but later experience in contact with Jowett tended to develop their peculiar powers, to make them eminently critical in their modes of thinking, and to awaken a tendency to scepticism. They found relief for this scepticism only in a deliberate and discriminative cultivation and refinement of their sensuous capacities. Mental and spiritual exhaustion, the result of sustained reflection, frequently meant for them unspeakable pain and *ennui*. How, in the tensity of their inner state — described graphically in Symonds's *Autobiography* and often referred to by Pater as "*siccum lumen*" — they could find strength and will at all to give play to their creative faculties is truly strange. Neither could receive anything into his thought without first subjecting it to a rigorous process of the most searching and penetrating criticism. Powerfully affected by the regnant Hegelianism of Oxford, their restless minds constantly analysed and synthesised current ideas, ridding them of discordances and producing finally a coherent and recognisable body of closely reticulated thought. Their thought played affectionately, almost with a feline tenacity, with contraries; they were eternally busy, probably often in planes lower than that of consciousness, in reconciling superficially antipodal conceptions. Their love of beauty saved them from a mere scholasticism; they did not play with ideas merely because the play was in itself delightful, but there was in their efforts a certain grim determination to coordinate and give a pattern to various strands of thought which desperately needed systematisation and order. Thus, in the beautiful prose of Pater, one may find him playing off with matchless finesse and subtlety ideas which he derived from such diverse sources as Newman, Arnold, and Ruskin; and in Symonds's

*Autobiography* the process is fully described. Like many of their contemporaries, they found inspiration and encouragement in the pages of Goethe, who became for them the presiding genius of their spirits. Symonds made the Proemium to *Gott and Welt* the formula for his life, while Pater found Goethe to be "the true illustration of the speculative temper," "one to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental individual knowledge; by whom no touch of the world of form, colour, and passion was disregarded."

Entering Oxford the same year, they brought with them interests already developed which altered in the course of their subsequent careers. Symonds came from Harrow, where, in the sixth form shortly before his University matriculation, he discovered for himself Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, "the consecration," he later wrote, "of a long-cherished idealism . . . as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato and delivered me from the torpid cynicism of my Harrow life." In Balliol, he was thrown into Jowett's society and became one of the Master's beloved pupils, the object of constant intellectual bombardment by that profound and liberating thinker. He was also frequently in the company of Thomas Hill Green, who was even then deeply absorbed in his studies of Hegel, preparing himself for the work by which he later became famous. Symonds was a patient and faithful student while he was an undergraduate and achieved several University honours. But he was never a slavish pedant. His soul was disturbed by vexing questions of faith and belief, and this vexation caused him to roam far and wide in search of anodynes. Later, in Italy, he was seriously influenced by Richard Congreve to embrace Positivism as a solution

of his spiritual problems. Though he did not yield, he did derive much from his personal acquaintance with Congreve and from his readings in Positivist literature, marks of which are evident in the preludes to his history of the Renaissance.

These contacts established in him a belief in the dignity and potentialities of man and helped to solidify that faith which became to him a guide and a stay. Symonds's faith in the progress and development of humanity was the result of a long and painful experience. Rejecting "dogmatic Christianity in all its forms, Broad Church Anglicanism, the gospel of Comte, Hegel's superb identification of human thought with essential Being, and many minor nostrums offered in our times to sickening faith — because none of these, forsooth, were adapted to my nature — I came to fraternise with Goethe, Cleanthes, Whitman, Bruno, Darwin, finding in their society I could spin my own cocoon with more congruence to my particular temperament than I discerned in other believers, misbelievers, non-believers, passionate unbelievers, of the ancient and modern schools. . . . I sought out friends from divers centuries, who seemed to have arrived, through their life-throes and ardent speculations, at something like the same intuition into the semieternally inscrutable as I had. . . . The perorations of all that I have written are inspired by this faith, as the substance of all my labour was for me made vital by it." [6]

Pater, too, entered Oxford a votary of Plato. His life at Queens College was beautiful and serene. He studied Greek philosophy under Jowett, notes of whose lectures, possibly, found their way ultimately into his *Plato and*

[6] H. F. Brown: *J. A. Symonds*, p. 326.

*Platonism* (1891). He was also deeply interested and moved by Ruskin's eloquent lectures. His reading of Otto Jahn's *Life of Winckelmann*, while he was a Fellow of Brasenose, deepened his interest in aesthetics. Its effects have been thus described by Mr. A. C. Benson: it "opened to him a new prospect. The teaching of Goethe had begun to seem too passionate, too sensual; the idealism of Ruskin degenerated too much into sentiment and forfeited balance and restraint: Hegel and Schelling were too remote from life, with all its colour, all its echoes; but in Winckelmann he found one who could devote himself to the passionate contemplation of beauty, without any taint or grossness of sense, who was penetrated by fiery emotion, but without any dalliance with feminine sentiment; whose sensitiveness was preternaturally acute, while his conception was cool and firm. Here then, he discovered, or appeared to himself to discover, a region in which beauty and philosophy might unite in a high impassioned mood of sustained intellectual emotion."

Pater was in Oxford's true apostolic succession of great stylists. Viewed in relation to his teachers, predecessors or contemporaries, he reveals very strikingly the harmony which he achieved in synthesising by sound Hegelian principles their not altogether diverse principles of life. In prose style he most resembled Newman, whose logical powers and close reticulation of ideas probably provided him with a norm. Where he differs is manifested in his tendency to vivid, concrete imagery, a quality for which, in an otherwise austere and monastic style, he was indebted to Ruskin. Ruskin revealed to his generation the latent possibilities of prose in conveying some of the rich and colourful effects of poetry; so deeply did these effects

appeal to Pater that one may see him thinking aloud on the matter in his classic essay *On Style*. It was through Ruskin's influence also that he approached Catholicism from its symbolic and ritualistic side rather than its dogma, the element which so deeply attracted Newman. Only in so far as Catholic dogma manifested a harmony of abstruse theological ideas did it interest Pater, but in Catholic ceremonialism — in church pageantries, garb, candles, stained glass, sonorous Latin, unearthly music — he found much which satisfied his aesthetic cravings. To him all religious manifestation was a spectacle and a drama to be enjoyed for its sensuous charm and inner, spiritual excitement, one more adventure for a highly sensitised soul.

For perhaps after all in the traditional sense, in the generally accepted sense of the term, he was not a Christian, but was a cultivated Hellenist whose curiosity and impassioned contemplation found delight in beholding the beautiful effects of Catholic liturgy and worship. He was most thoroughly at home in Plato's Athens, whither he had been inducted by Jowett. In the pages of the *Republic* and the *Dialogues* he found that which was most consonant with his own spiritual aptitudes. Plato's divine glimpses of the eternal beauty of ideas were revelations, and what Plato begat, Hegel nourished and brought to fruition. He took the Platonic concept, which Arnold in discussing religion had re-stated, that " the idea is the fact, the poetry," upon which religion rested and was justified, and unfolded it in many essays, pre-eminently in *Marius the Epicurean* but also in minor studies, *Coleridge*, *Rossetti*, *Emerald Uthwart*, *Diaphaneité*, and *Apollo in Picardy*. In his essay on Rossetti, he pointed out how deeply the latter had influenced

him and his generation. "To Rossetti, life is a crisis at every moment. A sustained impressibility towards the mysterious conditions of man's everyday life, towards the very mystery itself in it, gives a singular gravity to all his work: these matters never became trite to him . . ."

What could better describe the mind of Pater himself? Hedonism, pure delight in living, was in the air. Pater did not use the vile and ugly word; the phrase he used to describe it was "the new Cyrenaicism," a theory which exquisitely heightened expectation and realisation of the poignancy of life. It made life more rounded, more fully-blown, more harmonious and complete. Expressed in Pater's musical style, it had a strong fascination. That it prevailed so quickly in his own generation was probably due to the fact that Ruskin had prepared the way for it. Yet Pater's critical mind had operated on the Ruskinian philosophy and transmuted it. Ruskin's crude dualism in the mode for perceiving beauty — namely, through the "theoretic and sensuous faculties" — remained permanently in Pater's psychology and aesthetic; yet in the process of his thought it became so dimmed that one is not, in reading his prose, quite aware of its Ruskinian origin. Pater's secret was that he "bathed" the aesthetic or sensuous data in a fine glow of metaphysics, subtle, rarefied, highly discriminative. His syncretistic power is seen at its best in his reconciliation of the two concepts of art, the classical and the romantic, in his conclusion to *Appreciations*. There, as elsewhere in many places, he revealed the high truth that the sensuous alone without a theoretic *obbligato* was as impotent and inadequate as an idea without its physical accompaniment.

"It is no vague scholastic abstraction that will satisfy

the speculative instinct of our modern minds," he wrote in the chapter "Plato's Aesthetics" (*Plato and Platonism*). "Who would change the colour or curve of a rose-leaf for that colourless, formless, intangible being Plato put so high?" This was the core of his philosophy: to intensify the senses by making them susceptible to a rigid intellectual culture, and to expand the inner life by making it responsive to loveliness of physical no less than of spiritual beauty. Contemplation of an abstract beauty he taught was inseparable from the active search for delightful physical or bodily sensations. The two brought into a sympathetic harmony and diapason made for the enrichment and expansion of the soul in the attainment of a fully-blown and beautiful life. "High passions," he believed, "give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or 'the enthusiasm of humanity.'"[7] The body, he urged, was so to be trained and disciplined that it would ever more keenly respond to the play of life and beauty, so that no flash or scintillation of the multitudinous seas of sensation would be lost. Each vivid gleam of the moving waters of time was to be caught by delicately cultured organs of receptivity and fervently treasured in memory, capable of yielding frequently exquisite delight through the power of reminiscence and impassioned contemplation. Life itself so conceived would have its borders extended and its joy deepened by the living accumulation of delightful sensations and of enriching ideas. The inner and the outer life would then be perfectly attuned each to the other, in an enrichment not only of physical but of spiritual and intellectual experience as well.

[7] Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, first edition.

This interplay had been suggested though not brought vividly to focus by Matthew Arnold in his urging susceptibility to the magic of nature and an acute awareness of the moral nature of the inner life. Something of the sort was indicated in Arnold's essays on *Maurice de Guerin*, *Heine*, and *The Study of Poetry*. Pater, however, raised these two principles from the shadowy realm of hints to a harmony realisable in practice. The interplay of *aesthesis*, the principle of sensuousness, with *ascêsis*, the principle of moral restraint, he urged, would not only give character to an adequate life but would make experience poignant and delicate. "The diamond, we are told," Pater wrote, "if it be a fine one, may gain in value by what is cut away. It was after such a fashion that the manly youth of Lacedaemon had been cut and carved. Lenten, or monastic colours, brown and black, white and grey, give their utmost value for the eye . . . to the scarlet flower, the lighted candle, the cloth of gold. And Plato's aesthetics, remember! as such, are ever in close connection with Plato's ethics. It is life itself, action and character, he proposed to colour to get something of that irrepressible conscience of art, that spirit of control, into the general course of life, above all, into its energetic or impassioned acts." This was the governing concept of Pater's teaching. Stated in his matchless way, it made him one of the outstanding figures in Victorian literature.

Quite apart, however, from that significance is the fact that he was the most distinguished creative writer whose entire life was spent as an Oxford don. By his constant mingling in University society, he effectively enkindled stylistic and aesthetic powers in many young disciples, who were stirred to creative activity because he himself communi-

cated the germinating stimulus. His encouragements were noble and generous, leaving a deep impress upon his pupils which was manifested in the gospel which they bore forth from Oxford. Consciously or unconsciously, therefore, he assumed the office of philosophical expositor and mediator of the new aestheticism. His essay, *Aesthetic Poetry* (1868), written in a mood of violinic responsiveness to theories and movements then rife in Oxford, discloses the *milieu* in which his mind was formed and to which he gave utterance. "Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnambulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them. . . . Everywhere there is an impression of surprise, as of people first awaking from the golden age, at fire, snow, wine, the touch of water as one swims, the salt taste of the sea."

He too, like Arnold, made culture the controlling power of his life. With a leisure, however, that Arnold lacked, he imported into that formula Ruskinian enthusiasm for art and beauty, Jowett's passion for Plato, and Newman's aspirations for holiness and purity, harmonising them into a realisable theory of life, the ἦθος of Oxford. And this to serve the idea of beauty. What he wrote of Plato is amazingly applicable to himself: "His prose is a practical illustration of the value of that capacity for correction, of the effort, the intellectual astringency, which he demands of the poet also, the musician, of all true citizens of the ideal Republic, enhancing the sense of power in one's self, and its effect upon others, by a certain crafty reserve in its exercise, after the manner of a true expert. χαλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ — he is faithful to the Greek saying. Patience,

'infinite patience' may or may not be, as was said, of the very essence of genius; but it is certainly, quite as much as fire, of the mood of all true lovers. Ἴσως τὸ λεγόμενον ἀληθές, ὅτι χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά. Heraclitus had preferred the 'dry soul,' or the 'dry light' in it, as Bacon after him the *siccum lumen*. And the dry beauty, — let Plato teach us, to love that also, truly."

How fitting, then, that on the occasion of his death the beauty of his life and influence was made the theme of an elegy:

*"Calm Oxford autumns and preluding Springs!*
*To me your memory brings*
*Delight upon delight, but chiefest one;*
*The thought of Oxford's son,*
*Who gave me of his welcome and his praise,*
*When white were still my days;*
*Ere death had left life darkling, nor had sent*
*Lament upon lament . . .*
*O, sweet grave smiling of that wisdom, brought*
*From arduous ways of thought:*
*O, golden patience of that travailing soul*
*So hungered for the goal,*
*And vowed to keep, through subtly vigilant pain,*
*From pastime on the plain,*
*Enamoured of the difficult mountain air*
*Up Beauty's hill of prayer."* [8]

[8] Lionel Johnson: *Poems*, 1895, "To Walter Pater."

## Chapter X

### *ORGANIC FILAMENTS*

Two forces, then, rationalism and Catholicism, vied for mastery in Victorian Oxford. Neither was dominant long because, as the wheel of fortune revolved, one supplanted the other. As one triumphed, the other openly or secretly sapped its strength, causing successive fluctuations in the mind of the place, and leaving permanent marks in the literature of the age. In considering these various tides of thought, however, account must first be taken of the strong undertow which remained constant, however variable the upper currents.

This undertow was caused by devotion to Aristotle. Under the changed conditions of higher education, it is difficult to envisage the immense controlling power exerted at Oxford by intensive study of classic literature; still harder is it to realise the effect produced by rigorous and exclusive study of a single philosopher. There existed at Oxford, indeed, what practically amounted to a party spirit on behalf of Aristotle as though in secret opposition to the homage paid by Cambridge to Plato or to the speculative freedom of Scotch universities. "In Scotland," said Matthew Arnold, "you have in your philosophical studies small experience of the respect, formerly at any rate, paid at Oxford to text-books in philosophy, such as the *Sermons* of Bishop Butler, or the *Ethics* of Aristotle. Your students in philosophy have always read pretty widely, and have not

concentrated themselves, as we at Oxford used to concentrate ourselves, upon one or two great books. . . . We read our Aristotle or our Butler with the same absolute faith in the classicality of their matter as in the classicality of Homer's form."[1] And Newman was but expressing the dominant Oxford view of his time when he said, "While we are men we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelian, for the great Master does but analyse the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of humankind. . . . In many subject matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples, whether we will or no, though we may not like it."[2]

During the first half of the century, both Aristotle and the rationalism which he inspired, were employed in the interests of theology. Yet even within that period a movement developed to separate them. While Oxford was predominantly ecclesiastical — before, that is to say, the mid-century reforms — there was, nevertheless, in its range of study considerable expansion and progress within the limitations of the Laudian Statutes. Mark Pattison called attention to this in one of his interesting essays: "The Aristotelian movement," he wrote, "with us has not been a mere antiquarian's question; it is a real philosophical revival; it may have taken the shape of comment, or interpretation of a document, yet as we know some of the vital religious questions may assume the same form, so our intellectual movement has not been the less real for having in its early stages attached itself to the resuscitation of Greek philosophy."[3] Pattison further pointed out four stages through which the movement passed. The first was

[1] Arnold: *St. Paul and Protestantism*, p. 301.
[2] Newman: *Idea of a University*, Disc. V, sec. 5, p. 110.
[3] *Mind*, I, pp. 1–16.

the "scholar's," when Aristotle's text was studied as so much material for construing and translating; by 1830, when Cardwell's edition was published, the study advanced to a "common-sense" phase, as a manifestation of reaction against the formal philology of the first. As materials increased, the third or "critical" phase appeared, characterised by a cold, unyielding, matter-of-fact treatment. Finally, the fourth or "scientific" phase became dominant only to be undermined by the influences of other philosophers which were permitted by the provisions of the reforms.

Aristotle's utter objectivity and catena of compact ideas tended to produce similar effects in the thought and expression of those whose minds had been formed by intensive study of his work. Detachment, suspicion of passion or emotion, caution, dialectic, and scepticism were some of its fruits. In an atmosphere charged with Aristotelianism, rationalism could easily flourish. Newman's search for authority and John Morley's passion for intellectual freedom were equally sustained by the rationalistic impulse inspired by Aristotle. What Aristotle did for them and for others whose minds were nurtured in Victorian Oxford, was to make their thought more supple and flexible and at the same time to reveal the power of a contemplative life.

The study of Aristotle engendered an inner state in which critical analysis struggled with spiritual aspiration inspired by a search for truth. In so far the value of its effects may not be questioned. But the defects of minds produced by this over-attention to Aristotle became more evident as decades passed; for, outside of Oxford's special range of activities, its Aristotelianised mind was strangely

incompetent. Subservience to categorical thinking tended to check the free and spontaneous play of the imaginative impulse, turning it rather into fields and modes of expression in which reason and intellectual appeal prevailed. Against such conditions, pure imaginative effort struggled, and perhaps in many instances, poetic genius was stifled. Shelley's first contact with the inevitable Aristotle provoked his dismay; "What?" he asked impatiently, "must I then study Aristotle?"[4] And Jowett, the rationalist of rationalistic Balliol, confessed, "If a poet came to Balliol, I suppose we could not hold him."

Although Tractarianism developed from the Aristotelianised state of the place, at the same time it was the first symptom of an effort to retrieve lost communications and to re-establish Oxford's prestige in the national life and thought of England. Newman, its gifted leader, believed that "universities are the natural centers of intellectual movements"; a concept which profoundly inspired him. While in many of its manifestations it was pronouncedly Aristotelian, Tractarianism, nevertheless, resulted in distracting exclusive attention from the Stagirite. Even those who opposed the Movement and later undid much of its work in theological fields conceded its benefits. "Newman's romantic picture of the medieval Church," said Jowett, "carried away the young, who had before seen nothing but high and dry Anglicanism, with its social and political accompaniments. But Newmanism, though ecclesiastical and reactionary, was at the same time revolutionary in its way. . . . It cut active minds loose from their traditional moorings, and launched them on a sea of speculation over which they at last floated to a great

[4] T. J. Hogg: *Shelley at Oxford.*

diversity of havens."[5] Nine years after Tractarianism formally ended as a party movement, the University was reformed. Thereafter "far greater progress was made by the University than in any previous century of its existence."[6] Then began an era of rich and fertile activity which still continues. The study of Aristotle continued, to be sure, but with the destruction of obsolete restrictions diverse intellectual currents swept through the place. By the very fecundity of its ideas Oxford seemed, indeed, to be threatened with distraction from its primary aims. Learning flourished, and the University was more than ever a theatre of eager discussion. By the influx of various philosophies, its metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics were reconstructed. Newman, Aristotle, Carlyle, Plato, Mill, Comte, and Hegel had each his own school or coterie, incessantly active in radiating fresh and original light on traditional views. Stimulating personalities and thinkers, themselves writers of the first importance in official capacities as teaching members, also exerted profound influence upon disciples.

John Stuart Mill's *Logic* (1843) then permeated the University and decisively turned the thought of many into new directions. "With Mill's reputation," Morley wrote, "will stand the intellectual repute of a whole generation of his countrymen. The most eminent of those who are now (1877) so fast becoming the front line . . . all bear evidence of his influence, whether they are avowed disciples or avowed opponents. If they did not accept his method of teaching, at least he determined the questions about which they should think. For twenty years no one

[5] Abbott and Campbell: *Life of Jowett*, I, pp. 176–177.
[6] G. C. Brodrick: *History of the University of Oxford.*

at all open to serious intellectual impressions has left Oxford without having undergone the influence of Mr. Mill's writings. . . . The professorial chairs there . . . are more and more being filled with men whose minds have been trained in his principles." [7] It is hardly possible, indeed, to over-estimate the turn which Mill gave Oxford thought. His book caused a complete revolution in the understanding of the functions of logic. Whereas the accepted manuals took account only of the deductive form, Mill's reconstruction supplied an *organon* which reconciled deductive with inductive logic with particular applications to social sciences. The more audacious openly espoused it. As a result of their activities rationalism was re-born and the number of rationalists in Oxford considerably increased. They regarded Mill as the "saint" of this new rationalism which was more daring in inquiry and more resolute in its search for veracity than the old.

In some respects, Mill's influence was strengthened by Comte. Both were potent forces in stimulating Oxonians to the study of history by a new method. Positivism, like the Catholicism from which it sprang, and which it proposed to supplant, had a bundle of dogmas as unacceptable to the Millite rationalists as those which Newman accepted. In some respects it supplied the want of a system for many whose minds had been prepared by Tractarianism. Others, not ready to accept it in its systematic form, were indebted to it for suggestions, involving a philosophy of history; for Comte, like Carlyle, who also greatly influenced Oxford thought, saw history as the achievements of great men. For the Catholic concept of a transcendental God inspiring the course of events, Comte substituted the con-

[7] Morley: *Miscellanies*, III: 30.

cept of a collective spirit of humanity which was more worthy to be worshipped and more verifiable in experience. He gave the stamp of science to his philosophy by emphasising the social and intellectual forces which made for progress. His insistence upon the principle of development, the passage of the mind of man from earlier stages of theological and philosophical speculation to scientific certainty, won many whose faith had been disturbed by discoveries in natural science and by higher criticism of the Scriptures. His influence upon the social aspect of history may be seen in the work of some eminent Oxford historians who were greatly influenced by him: in J. H. Bridge's *Colet* and *Richelieu* (1870), eminent contributions to the history of European ideas, and in J. Cotter Morison's *Life of St. Bernard* (1863), which, said Morley, "has been equally admired by Catholics and rationalists."

The intellectual influences of both Mill and Comte met with opposition in Oxford from the disciples of Kant and Hegel. Hegelianism supplied a metaphysic which beautifully harmonised with the growing spirit of idealism which the revived study of Plato stirred in the University. It saw in history the movement of the "Zeitgeist" or "time-spirit" and gave order and meaning to the heterogeneous and diverse tendencies of mankind in working out his salvation through civilisation. Its metaphysics was a music of ideas whose rhythms and tones satisfied the Oxonian ear long trained in the subtleties of dialectic. Primarily transcendental, subjective, and poetic, it appealed to the imaginative appetites of those who sought to find scope for the play of creativeness in philosophy. In the course of time, through Jowett and his pupils, Oxford became the center of a "neo-Kantian" and "neo-Hegelian" school,

of which Thomas Hill Green was the foremost exponent.

These were the chief extra-mural currents which influenced Oxford in the last half of the century and weakened the sovereignty of Aristotle. Though they were hospitably welcomed, they suffered changes in contact with Oxonian thought. For within the University healthy and vigorous movements were active and were not to be easily supplanted. Out of the conjunction, arose a fresh movement which dominated Oxford thought during the last quarter of the century. The process of completely breaking down the Aristotelian monopoly was achieved by three great teachers: Jowett, Arnold, and Ruskin. Through Jowett's revival of the study of Plato, Arnold's gospel of culture, and Ruskin's evangel of art, the atmosphere of the place changed, and spiritual currents were created in which the poetic mind could thrive. As a result of their influence, largely effective because of their brilliant personalities, the Oxford scene became remarkably similar to that in Renaissance Italy when the winter of dogma thawed. Oxonians like Symonds and Pater were keenly aware of the resemblance; their studies and interpretations of Italian humanism were logically motivated by their recognition of the similarity.

Aestheticism, the characteristic and prevailing phase of late Victorian Oxford thought, was not properly a "movement" in the sense in which Tractarianism had been, for it was not regimented through the genius of any one outstanding leader or exponent. Individuals like Rossetti, Swinburne, Pater, and Wilde did, it is true, greatly influence its tone and direction but none stands out as Newman does for the Tractarian movement. Nevertheless aestheticism did have a certain concert pitch; it did possess

certain agreements perhaps best indicated in Pater's conclusion to his *Studies in the Renaissance.* In the course of its expansion it assumed some aspects of a definite and realisable theory which was fed by various influences then at work in the University. It became not merely a theory of art, but a theory of art which was worked up into a theory of life with a coherent and integrated content. There is a certain fitness in the fact that the aesthetic movement was the outgrowth of the writings and lectures of an Oxonian who had in his undergraduate days been deeply influenced by the Tractarian movement, for thus, in large measure, it continued the trend which that earlier movement had originated. There is also a certain fitness in the fact that it should have been harboured by Oxford. The fact had immense significance. There still lingered that interest in ecclesiastical art which the Tractarians had cultivated and which had deepened and broadened through the revival of intense study of Plato and the introduction of Hegelianism. When Pre-Raphaelitism entered as an additional influence, the process of making Oxford a center of philosophy of beauty was completed.

Largely through the dialectic which transformed Ruskin's system, this philosophy was shorn of the ethical circumscriptions with which Ruskin endowed it. It made aesthetic experience to be the pure delight of discovering "the joyous element" both in art and in life. Rossetti's influence upon his young Oxonian admirers had much to do with this transformation. What Ruskin planted, Rossetti watered, and Oscar Wilde, in the fullness of time, garnered. Ruskin hardly foresaw the consequences when he introduced Rossetti to Oxford to decorate the Oxford Union. Save for a passion for loveliness, the two men had

temperamentally little in common; in so far as Rossetti expressed his vision of beauty in color, giving through that means body to abstract ideas with suggestions of a noble morality, Ruskin found nothing of which to complain; but when Rossetti's poetry appeared in the seventies, after it had been privately circulated and familiarly known for some fifteen years by his little coterie of devoted Pre-Raphaelites in Oxford, the Art Professor could not only not approve it but was moved to fervent exhortations against it. Wasn't there something strangely unEnglish in it? It certainly required some rationalising to explain it. "Rossetti," he vehemently said, "is really not an Englishman at all, but a great Italian tormented in the Inferno of England; doing the best he could, but the 'could' shortened by the strength of his animal passion, without any trained control, or guiding faith." Beauty was Rossetti's chief theme. To the moral effect of his art, either in painting or poetry, he paid little if any attention, for Beauty, he believed, was its own justification. How little in accord was this with Ruskin's idea! In engaging Rossetti to assist in the beautification of new buildings at Oxford, Ruskin therefore innocently hatched a serpent's egg in his own nest.

Ruskin's aesthetic had also to meet the searching criticism of those whose studies of Plato and Hegel equipped them with ideas not wholly in harmony with his teachings. Poets and thinkers who directly or indirectly were influenced by Jowett were impatient not only with Ruskin's dogmatism but with certain deficiencies of his intellect chiefly manifested in his tendency to sentiment. Under their rigorous and searching analysis Ruskin's lyrical rhapsodies could not disguise his lapses in co-ordinated

thinking. In a completely branched scheme he had systematised his ideas concerning art and its appreciation, but in many respects his work was at best but a specious patchwork sewed together with Aristotelian threads. Its nicely ordered categories had only a surface precision which disappeared at the touch of criticism. To justify his theory he constructed out of romantic cobwebs the psychology of an imaginary moral man; having done so, he made his system fit into it, and naïvely assumed as postulates axioms concerning that moral man which in experience are probably undemonstrable. But his inconsistencies were even more serious to some of his disciples than his deficiencies. After having elaborately outlined the activity of the "contemplative faculty," for instance, he proceeded at once to negate it by insisting that "ideas of beauty are the subjects of moral but not of the intellectual perception." Any amateur logician without exercising needless ingenuity may find, as many keen and experienced dialecticians at Oxford did, many similar defects in Ruskin's logic and observations.

The outstanding flaw in his system was his failure to draw the distinction between the two modes of perception which he emphasised: the "moral" and the "intellectual." Even if it were really true that the intellect and senses have relatively little to do in the act of enjoying beauty, he did not succeed in convincing some of his disciples. It was at this point that Oxonian dialectics demolished his system and robbed it of its apparent finality and authority. As a younger generation of thinkers appeared on the Oxford scene, they discovered his categories and dichotomies to be far less absolute and verifiable in experience than he had supposed. They appropriated what

was good in his system. They discarded or ignored the rest, dissipating and undermining, as they did so, the distinctly ethical and religious basis on which it rested. After this disintegrating process, it was indeed still a gospel, but no longer a law. Oscar Wilde, chief spokesman and exponent of the philosophy into which it evolved, generously acknowledged the power of Ruskin's evangel, but made an interesting discrimination: "Master indeed of all noble living and the wisdom of all spiritual things will Ruskin be to us forever, seeing that it was he who, by the magic of his presence, and the music of his lips, taught us at Oxford that enthusiasm for beauty, which is the secret of Hellenism, and that desire for creation, which is the secret of life, and filled some of us, at least, with the lofty and passionate ambition to go forth into far and fair lands with some message for the nation, and some mission for the world, and yet in his art criticism, his estimate of the joyous element of art, his whole method of approaching art, we are no longer with him, for the keystone of his aesthetic is ethical always. He would judge of a picture by the amount of noble ideas which it expresses, but to us, the channels by which all noble work in painting can touch and does touch the soul are not those of truths of life, or metaphysical truths. . . . To us, the rôle of art is not the rôle of morals." Ruskin, on the other hand, drew back in disgust from the tendency of the "yellow book" age. "I find," he wrote with exasperation, "that the 'general student' has plunged into such abysses, not of analytic, but of dissolytic — dialytic — or even diarrhoeic — lies, belonging to the sooty and sensual elements of his London and Paris life. . . ."[8]

[8] Ruskin: Preface No. 2, *Sesame and Lilies.*

Pagan tendencies of the philosophy of aestheticism were held rigidly in restraint through the personal influence of Walter Pater. He and his disciples found in the contemplation of beauty, to be sure, a joyous and "Hellenic" activity; but when firm hold upon dogmatic Christianity seemed forever gone, they found in liturgies and ceremonials one satisfaction of a craving for sensuous and spiritual excitement which made every moment "a pure, hard, gem-like flame."

The Paterian school took two forms which still exercise great influence: one towards a frank paganism seen in the work of Oscar Wilde, and the other towards a Platonic and impassioned type of Catholicism, largely bereft of assents to dogma, seen best perhaps in the poetry of Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson. And yet a mere hair's breadth separated them. The religious, inner attitude of reverence for spirituality which distinguishes the work of Dowson and Johnson may also be seen in Wilde's essays, particularly in the *De Profundis*, where the figure of Christ is disclosed as the Prince of Romanticists, the motivating power of Wilde's gospel of joyous life. His very words tremble with sacerdotal connotation; the most frequently occurring are "purity," "chastity," "nobility," "humility," "reticence," and "holiness." As the century ended, Pater's influence either through his own writings or through those of his disciples, was supreme in the world of letters, lending it colour and music. While his influence was at its height, an Oxford scholar wrote his *Religio Academici*, which tellingly summarises the feelings which the contemplation of the beautiful place aroused in him:

*"Nothing remains but Beauty." He said, and wearily sighing,*
*Sat upon Shotover stile, gazing on Oxford below,*
*Minaret-crowned St. Mary's, and Magdalen Tower, and Merton,*
*Far-off jewels of light, fringed with a circle of shade,*
*Sat in the shining floods.*
*. . . Hark, music of Angels is there,*
*Melody Magdalen-haunted; afar it rose in the distance,*
*Bringing a prayer to the lip, bringing a tear to the eye,*
*Borne on the breeze, or fancied. We sate. The city illumined*
*Shone as a rose; night shade slowly beginning to fall.*
*Ah! what a vision was there! But then a vapour ascending*
*Rose over turret and spire, crept over College and Hall,*
*Death-white, all-enfolding. . . .*
*"Look! that is me," he whispered. "I had it once, I am certain,*
*Once I had faith. But now! Now there is mist over all."* [9]

[9] Arthur Gray Butler: *Religio Academici.*

## Chapter XI

### *GENIUS LOCI*

"Every Society, every Polity," Carlyle wrote in 1831, "has a spiritual principle; is the embodiment, tentative and more or less complete, of an Idea; all its tendencies of endeavour, specialties of custom, its laws, politics, and whole procedure . . . are prescribed by an Idea, and flow naturally from it as movements from the living source of motion. This Idea . . . is ever a true loyalty; has in it something of a religious, paramount, quite infinite character; it is properly . . . its Life; mysterious as other forms of life, and like these, working secretly, and in a depth below that of consciousness."[1]

This observation is strikingly applicable to Victorian Oxford, whose "idea" or formative principle, as it was stated by its defenders, is to awaken human powers in individuals and to adjust them to a highly developed society. Its object, said Coplestone, is "to execute an established system, and to recommend what is thoroughly approved." Amplifying this idea he said: "If we can send out into the world an annual supply of men, whose minds are imbued with literature according to their several measures of capacity, impressed with what we hold to be the soundest principles of policy and religion, grounded in the elements of science, and taught how they may best direct their efforts to farther attainments in that

[1] *Characteristics.*

line; if, with this common stock, of which they all partake, they be encouraged afterwards to strike off into the several professions and employments of life, to engage in the public service of the state, or to watch over and manage the lesser circle of affairs, which the independent gentlemen of this country, and of this country only, conduct in their several neighbourhoods; I think we do a greater and more solid good to the nation than if we sought to extend over Europe the fame of a few exalted individuals, or to acquire renown by exploring untrodden regions, and by holding up to the world, ever ready to admire what is new, the fruits of our discovery."[2]

Another nineteenth century interpreter of Oxford, whose knowledge of the historical backgrounds of the University was wider than Coplestone's, pointed out the origin and evolution of Oxford's traditional devotion to letters. "Under the old school system, coeval with the rise of Universities in modern Europe, 'logic' implied a training in reasoning. The disputations, whatever else they neglected, communicated a habit of exact thought. When the Classical epoch superseded the Scholastic, the dialectical method of *writing*, it was soon found, had no chance with the public, in comparison with that which aimed at the graces and ornaments of style. Not till long after the schoolmen had been supplanted in the press by the new style, did the same influence reach the Universities; and the dialecticians were supplanted by the rhetoricians. It was natural then that Logic should gradually fall into desuetude. . . . The engine to which our education trusted for mental discipline was transferred from

[2] Edward Coplestone: *Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review*, 1810, p. 327.

disputation (dialectical) to composition (rhetorical). Instead of being trained to argue, men were trained to write with ease. . . . The living power of the system, that by which it gave its education, was now in the *viva voce* construing, and the writing exercises, prose and verse; and, most important of all, in that thorough inculcation of the ancient models by which alone taste can be brought to perfection." [3] The efforts of other thinkers to express in philosophical form the "idea of Oxford" have also stressed the importance of letters. Newman's emphasis upon the educational values of the study of literature in *The Idea of a University* is familiar to the present-day readers. To paraphrase Carlyle, then, literary study has been the quickening force of Oxford's discipline, the fountain from which flow, as streams from a living source, all its tendencies of effort, specialties of custom, laws, manners, procedure.

This study of letters, in Pattison's phrase, "the engine of Oxford education," has been manifested in the literary work of Oxonians by a tendency to reflective prose in an effort to communicate a sense of beauty and a search for perfection. As everyone knows, there has been at Oxford since the period of the Renaissance a continuous tradition for literary style. So powerfully has it operated that its effects in literature are immense. It may, for instance, be noted in the familiar fact that until the beginning of the nineteenth century Oxford's peculiar contribution to the national literature was that it gave some of the great prose stylists as distinguished from Cambridge's contribution of the great university-bred poets — Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Wordsworth, Coleridge. If Cambridge has been

[3] Mark Pattison: *Report of Royal Commission*, p. 42 of "Evidence."

dominated by another idea and another discipline — the study of mathematics and science — its poets were an accident. Oxford writers, on the other hand, were satisfying an impulse which, if Oxford did not originate, it sustained and developed. For that reason, Oxford has long enjoyed the distinction of being called England's "republic of letters," as such acknowledged by many Cambridge poets, including Wordsworth and Dryden:

> *"Oxford to him a dearer name shall be*
> *Than his own mother-university.*
> *Thebes did his green unthinking age engage,*
> *He chooses Athens for his riper age."*

And yet though Oxford has always been recognised as the seat of English literary authority, the best that can be said for it from the time of Charles I to William IV is that for almost two hundred years it was peculiarly parochial and ineffective as a collective and formative power upon English thought or letters. Particularly was this true in the eighteenth century. "Except Methodism," wrote the head of an Oxford College, "the great movements of thought of the artificial society of the eighteenth century had no connection with the University, and the minds which dominated the school of politics and literature were trained in a wholly different school."[4] In large measure this indictment is sustained in Mr. A. D. Godley's *Oxford in the Eighteenth Century*, in J. R. Green's *Studies of Oxford*, and in Christopher Wordsworth's *Social Life in the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century*. Except possibly in the case of Blackstone and of Thomas Warton, Jr., Oxford itself pro-

[4] G. C. Brodrick: *Memorials of Merton.*

vided neither the scene nor the inspiration for great literary or intellectual achievements. It is highly doubtful if Addison, Collins, or Dr. Johnson owed it much.

Dramatic significance, therefore, may be seen in Emerson's comment in 1848: "England is the land of mixture and surprise, and when you have settled it that the universities are moribund, out comes a poetic influence from the heart of Oxford to mould the opinions of cities, to build their houses as simply as birds their nests, and charm mankind as an appeal to the moral order always must." [5] Oxford's re-awakening and restoration of prestige during the last century is an outstanding episode in the history of English culture with immense significance in Victorian literature. The effort of this book has been to point out the causes. The awakening was the concomitant, if not the result, of an ascertainable series of causes, of which the first was the interaction of two parties: of Liberals who sought to enlist the aid of Parliament in Oxford reform, and of Conservatives who vigorously opposed them. Other causes, like the Tractarian Movement, the renewal of speculative and literary activity, and the succession of influential personalities, should be considered against the background of this initial conflict concerning the "idea," the structure, and the function of Oxford. Assaults aroused reflective minds to rationalise and revitalise the traditional system, a process in which sentiment for *genius loci* was elevated to an articulate plane. This expression was manifested in two forms: in various literary efforts, among which Newman's *Idea of a University*, Arnold's *Thyrsis*, and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* are outstanding; and in a gregarious sentiment by which

[5] Emerson: *English Traits*.

Oxonians sought to infuse the spirit of their *alma mater* in various intellectual and creative movements of their day.

In recent years there have been many attempts to "compose" the Victorian mind: to fix it, that is to say, into some convenient focus so that its different phases might be seen in relation to some main pattern. They have shown, however, that at present the effort cannot satisfactorily be made. Either our focus is not yet properly adjusted, or our eyes too myopic. The age was too diversified, energetic, and complex to admit of a single comprehensive unity which may be adequately phrased in some pat formula. Nevertheless the effort has resulted in making clear some main currents. Utilitarianism, democratic doctrine, rationalism, the development of inductive science, aestheticism — these are some of the chief forces which made the Victorian mind.

One of the most important forces was Liberalism, which, in some respects, was strikingly similar to the humanism of the Italian Renaissance. "The essence of humanism," wrote Symonds, "consisted in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classic literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom. It was partly a reaction against ecclesiastical despotism, partly an attempt to find the point of unity for all that had been thought and done by man with the mind restored to consciousness of its own sovereign authority." [5] Victorian Liberals were continuators of the movement to liberate humanity from all repressing influences. When

[5] *Renaissance in Italy*, II: 52.

they were scholars they fortified their faith by historical researches and by love of classic letters. Here their resemblance to their forerunners was most striking.

There was, nevertheless, a significant difference between them, a difference which lay largely in the matter of ethics. The earlier humanists were not especially concerned with morals, with working out a theory of life on a high ethical plane. Their chief passion was for beauty, power, intelligence. Contrasted with them their Victorian successors insisted upon a moral equation of life. In this respect they were in tune with the spirit of the age. Concern for morality is recurrent in Victorian literature. Whatever the cause or immediate intellectual and social conditions out of which it arose, it increased as the period of the Regency gave way to the Victorian. This transition was pointed out by Thackeray in his *Four Georges*. Concern for morality is equally prominent in the fiction of Dickens and George Eliot, in Carlyle's essays, and in the poetry of Tennyson and Browning.

Yet there was a tendency, even in morals, towards externals. England was beginning to depend upon mechanism for its salvation. Habituation to machines tended to create the notion that conduct could be controlled as simply as one starts or stops an engine; that if the machinery of conduct were not properly working, a little tinkering here or there would suffice. A certain hard, inflexible, resisting objectivity became widely accepted as the only reasonable view of life. It was manifested in the mechanical way the Victorians had of estimating the value of institutional reforms. No doubt the reforms of the time accomplished great good, and England was the better for them; but with the spread of democracy, which

the reforms aided, and with the fundamental changes in belief which science effected, traditional assurances and consolations of religion were rapidly failing, and with them were also going active powers of an acute inner life. Conventional morality seemed destined to prevail. Many significant writers, pre-eminently Carlyle, challenged this possibility, seeking to establish conduct on a spiritual basis.

Oxford humanists were among those who sought to conserve spiritual forces. However diverse may have been their individual views and tendencies, the moral note is strong in their writings. But this note was rooted in "magnanimity": they were braced and strengthened by devoted study of Aristotle's *Ethics*, in which "the high-minded man" was so excellently portrayed. This was the pattern which shaped their lives, giving the final tone and character to their thinking and conduct. To Newman, morality was incomplete without piety; to Ruskin, art was the inevitable expression of the moral character of the artist or his times; to Arnold, though conduct was "three-fourths of life" it needed to be tempered by "sweetness and light"; and to Walter Pater, *aesthesis* was the ever-needful balance of *ascêsis*. Criticism was the process by which Oxford through them influenced the Victorian mind. Through criticism of inadequacies, either expressly stated or implied, they created a suspicion of the prevalent mechanistic views. Formed by Oxford, they themselves in official capacities exerted upon its collective life and tendencies a deep and extended influence, communicating to young and plastic minds splendid glimpses of their own inner vision. Thus it could truly be said, in the words of John Morley, that Oxford was a place "from which so many noblest ideas have come, and are coming every

day, in which every vision, though vain as the shadow of smoke, however little in accord with the outside world, finds a home and finds disciples."

Oxford's great task, as it was voiced by Matthew Arnold, was to conserve human powers; to make possible a contemplative career in an age of far-reaching social and intellectual changes; and to interpret human life afresh by securing a fresh spiritual basis for it. Consequently, when Oxford became the scene of conflicts as fierce as any of its earlier days, its sons rallied to its cause and made its soul articulate. "Oxford," said Arnold, "the Oxford of the past, has many faults; and she has paid heavily for them in defeat, in isolation, in want of hold upon the modern world. Yet we in Oxford, brought up amidst the beauty of that beautiful place, have not failed to seize one truth — the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection. When I insist upon this, I am in all the faith and traditions of Oxford." And again: "We have not won our political battles, we have not marched victoriously with the modern world; but we have told silently upon the mind of the country; we have prepared currents of feeling which sap our adversaries' position when it seems gained." . . . "Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs! and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! . . . Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene! . . . Steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford by her ineffable

charm keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection? "

Oxford's four great humanists were not content, however, merely with pointing out inadequacies. They were also creative personalities, influencing England and the modern world no less than Oxford. Newman pointed the way to spiritual poise; Arnold, to intelligence; Ruskin, to beauty; Pater, to aesthetic repose. When we think of them, how hard it is to escape from thinking that they made Oxford in a time of great expansion and energy not only a perpetual inspiration and joy but a creative power in modern life and thought. Through them the world has come to conceive Oxford as a symbol; as something more than a name, a place, or a center of learning. They have made it a radiating force, an Idea, an undying faith; a hope and a light, indeed, for some whose eyes have never seen it except in the pages of Victorian literature.

*" There is that Oxford, strong to charm us yet,*
*Eternal in her beauty and her past.*
*What though her soul be vexed? She can forget*
*Cares of an hour; only the great things last —*

*Only the gracious air, only the charm,*
*And ancient might of true humanities;*
*These, nor assault of man, nor time, can harm:*
*Not these; nor Oxford with her memories."* [7]

[7] Lionel Johnson: *Oxford: to Arthur Galton.*

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# VITA

William Skinkle Knickerbocker, son of Henry T. and Lucy B. (*née* Skinkle) Knickerbocker, was born in New York City, January 7, 1892. After completing the work of the public elementary and secondary schools in the Borough of Manhattan, he spent three years in the Bible Teachers Training School (now The Biblical Seminary of New York), receiving diploma from its theological department in 1914. Then entering Columbia College, he completed his undergraduate course in 1917, and was appointed Proudfit Fellow in English Letters in the Graduate School of Columbia University, receiving the degree of Master of Arts in 1918. He was then instructor in English in Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H., for one year (1918–1919). In 1919, he was again appointed Proudfit Fellow at Columbia. Since 1920, he has been Assistant Professor of English in the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University.

In June, 1921, he married Frances Wentworth Cutler of Waban, Mass., and has two children: Charles Herrick and Richard Wentworth.

Publications: "Matthew Arnold's Theory of Poetry" in *Sewanee Review*, October, 1925; and Arnold's "Culture and Anarchy" (edited with introduction and notes), Macmillan Company (in press).